



# **BRICS: STRATEGIES OF PERSUASION**

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## **DECLARATION**

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## **DEDICATION**

To the curious and the contemplative. To those who serve by carrying forth knowledge; to those who critique and mould new meaning; to those who laboured endlessly to produce the work I have drawn upon to stimulate and advance this dissertation.

To those who have fragmented the cobbled avenues of my perception, moving me to pave my own path to tread.

To family, to friends and to Martha.

## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation explores the strategic communications of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) intergovernmental platform. BRICS is a recent addition to the growing array of international organisations. Though BRICS consists of significant emerging and re-emerging states, it remains poorly perceived and obscure. Previous analyses that have examined BRICS as an aggregation of its member states or distinguished it simply as a slogan designed by Goldman Sachs have failed to discern it for the rhetorical, strategic entity that it is. This dissertation focuses on BRICS' essence and intent, its strategic communications. It analyses BRICS' narrative and scenario, examining its rhetorical appeals, its strategies and tactics of persuasion.

The study employs a critical rhetorical analysis to explore publically available primary documentation emanating from high-level BRICS meetings. Three analytical chapters assess this corpus, conceptually distinguished as programmatic (Memoranda of Understanding, agreements and treaties), organic (summit Declarations) and opportunistic (Statements) documents. This analysis expediently takes from disciplines and schools of thought to qualitatively and inductively assess strategic style and agency. It applies theoretical and conceptual tools to examine claims that emerge from the texts. BRICS' documents present organisational strategy and articulate its appeals. These are rhetorically explored to discern BRICS, per se. BRICS' rhetoric motions towards its aims. Its strategic means, ways and ends are closely assessed.

The dissertation finds that BRICS is an informal intergovernmental regime towards engendering reform inside of the normative international order. Its claims indirectly shape global governance according to its interests. BRICS is a process-driven advocacy mechanism that brings states together as nodes in a state-centric intergovernmental style. It rhetorically steers towards its aspired outcomes without taking considerable action. It does so to avoid responsibility. It rhetorically performs the principles and norms of the legitimate international order under the United Nations, in order to substantiate its form of multilateralism; to actualise reform while maintaining structure. By employing its principles and norms, BRICS embodies and therefore territorialises the multilateral order. BRICS' strategic communications develop an alternative narrative towards steering

international cooperation and exchange. Its articulation of the international order confronts dictated hegemonic conceptions, asserting that no unilateral interpretation holds an absolute truth. Sovereign states are not circumscribed by other states but only by legitimate international law and order. In doing so BRICS pursues international recognition for its member states, disrupts what it perceives to be hegemonic inertia and redefines global governance.

BRICS illustrates a significant modality to assess the contemporary international order and the recent developments in global power. Its indirect form, a procedural and fluid platform for extra-Western sovereign states to pursue influence and execute wills, proposes the evolution of international power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. BRICS actively employs a hybrid (both-and) strategy to lead toward a reformed global order based on a greater balance of powers (multipolarity). The development of BRICS and BRICS Plus presents compelling cases for further, critical studies.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| BASIC | Brazil, South Africa, India and China         |
| BRIC  | Brazil, Russia, India and China               |
| BRICS | Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa |
| CPC   | Communist Party of China                      |
| CRA   | Contingent Reserve Arrangement                |
| DPRK  | Democratic People's Republic of Korea         |
| EMDC  | Emerging Market and Developing Countries      |
| G7    | Group of Seven                                |
| G77   | Group of Seventy Seven                        |
| G8    | Group of Eight                                |
| G13   | Group of Thirteen                             |
| G20   | Group of Twenty                               |
| GDP   | Gross Domestic Product                        |
| IBSA  | India, Brazil and South Africa                |
| IGO   | Intergovernmental Organisation                |
| IMF   | International Monetary Fund                   |
| IW    | Irregular Warfare                             |
| MDG   | Millennium Development Goals                  |
| MOU   | Memorandum of Understanding                   |
| NATO  | North Atlantic Treaty Organization            |
| NDB   | New Development Bank                          |

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| NGO   | Nongovernmental Organisation                           |
| NIEO  | New International Economic Order                       |
| NWICO | New World Information and Communication Order          |
| O5    | Outreach Five  |
| OECD  | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| OPEC  | Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries      |
| PRC   | People's Republic of China                             |
| QDR   | Quadrennial Defense Review                             |
| R2P   | Responsibility to Protect                              |
| SCO   | Shanghai Cooperation Organisation                      |
| SDG   | Sustainable Development Goals                          |
| SOC   | State Owned Company                                    |
| UN    | United Nations   |
| UNGA  | United Nations General Assembly                        |
| UNIDO | United Nations Development Organisation                |
| UNSC  | United Nations Security Council                        |
| US    | United States of America                               |
| WEF   | World Economic Forum                                   |
| WTO   | World Trade Organization                               |

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

“In the course of the next several decades, a functioning structure of global cooperation, based on geopolitical realities, could thus emerge and gradually assume the mantle of the world's current ‘regent’”.

Zbigniew Brzezinski (Brzezinski, 1997: 215)

“There is no reason to doubt that the economic potential of the new centres of global economic growth will inevitably be converted into political influence and will strengthen multipolarity...we would like to interact with also independent and responsible partners with whom we can work together in constructing a fair and democratic world order, that would ensure security and prosperity not only for a select few, but for all”.

Vladimir Putin (Putin, 2007)

“As BRICS we need to be very, very clear and cogent about what we want. We are a forum that intends to put onto the world stage progressive ideas and we must use our collaboration to influence the direction of institutions such as IMF, the policies of the World Bank, our presence in the United Nations, the kinds of programmes that the UN adopts and we actually should insist on democratising that institution that has remained in structure and mechanism largely the same as when it was initiated in 1948. So if BRICS begins to partner in a way that really unites us powerfully on what we bring into the global stage I think we will have a collaborative partnership of great influence...BRICS stands in a very good position to be a major initiator of change”.

Naledi Pandor (Pandor, 2018)

## INTRODUCTION

The Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) intergovernmental regime presents an avenue that leads from the present international order to that which is to come. It is the collaborating design of divergent states to push global organisational reform, while avoiding revolution. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore BRICS. To examine how it informs of the contemporary global, power-political moment. The sustained interactions of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China), since 2006, and BRICS, since 2011, forming a distinguishable intergovernmental organisation, has been a significant geopolitical development of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The cooperation between these emerging and re-emerging states into a consolidated entity has had a direct impact on global power and order. Its development transcends previous extra-Western formations due to its acute strategic perceptions and formulations. BRICS performs an evolving, process-driven global governance<sup>1</sup> forum. Together member states form an authoritative, alternative claim of how global power should function. BRICS advances the actualisation of its vision through persuasion and dissuasion. It introduces a new global narrative and scenario found around the principles and norms of the international order. In 2017 the group commenced its “second golden decade of BRICS cooperation and solidarity” (BRICS, 2017c), re-establishing its multilateral position and signalling its maturing presence as an advancing constituent within international affairs. This evolving formation of regional powers presents a paradigm through which to comprehend the global zeitgeist, especially its changing dynamics.

BRICS displays modern, networked power. States are its primary nodes of power. Its development of state-to-state exchanges returns power from international institutions to state-centrism. BRICS demonstrates a complex, integrated structure of power. It carefully evolves, not replaces, established logics. To do so it requires recognition and influence. Its hybrid model builds cooperative power in, through and with other states. This model necessitates hybrid strategies, suited to the evolving flows and spaces of power; allowing states to advance their independent interests.

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<sup>1</sup> Global governance refers both to the norms upheld and the processes undertaken by global organisations in their coordination of actions (Duggan, 2015: 12).

BRICS engages state leaders, ministries and representatives to produce a consolidated intergovernmental regime. This is a strategic construct; it develops and advances understanding of itself, its member states, of other states, of hegemonic powers and of the world. The BRICS unit, not the individual states, represents its functions. BRICS thereby forms a separate agent of international affairs. BRICS communicates through its cumulative Declarations and Statements, released at its meetings. These strategic and tactical representations produce an independent narrative, indirectly informing the prevailing international order.

Despite its actual significance, BRICS remains poorly distinguished in academic analysis and public discourse. Discernment of this consolidated intergovernmental forum remains lost among the broad range of conceptual inferences that fluctuate between earlier hype and recent dismissal. The majority of work undertaken to distinguish BRICS focuses on the individual member states and their particulars, not on the significance and strategic ambitions of the group.

BRICS is a nascent organisation, without a constituting agreement or administration. Beyond its Declarations and Statements it has few institutions and platforms through which to convey its strategic intentions. Its significance is greatly pursued through its rhetoric. Instead of commencing examination here, assorted inferences have produced misguided comprehension by elevating BRICS into the global consciousness as something it is not. It has done so by affixing instead of pursuing signification.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This dissertation presents an exploration of BRICS. Previous studies of BRICS make up the bulk of the literature reviewed, thereby producing the *state of the art*. BRICS, first as BRIC, has been studied across a wide range of fields and through many different lenses. It has broadly been analysed according to three orientations.

The first body of research narrowly and often dismissively appraises BRICS upon the artificial assessment that it comprises an economic bloc. It follows the original

conception of *BRIC* by Goldman Sachs, as an investment slogan<sup>2</sup>. These assessments avoid the group's agency and strategy, often rejecting it *in toto*, proposing acronymic formations of other countries that would produce better investment returns (Goldstone, 2011). Pesek (2015) is one such example. The author discusses BRICS' political existence, based solely on an investment assessment. These studies often appraise BRICS as an inappropriate alliance with great differences among members (Alessi, 2012), incoherence in United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voting patterns (Hooijmaaijers, 2011), or simply as having no reason to exist (Sparks, 2013; Ünay, 2013). Some analysts (Armijo and Roberts, 2014; Brüttsch and Papa, 2012) suggest that for BRICS to be effective its member states must directly ally through common interests. Others suggest that "to be able to form a counter-hegemonic coalition necessary to challenge the current liberal international order led by the overly powerful US, some coherence in foreign policy preferences among them is essential" (Peitz, 2015). These views adopt false assumptions. They do not probe BRICS' approach, nor do they assess its strategic intent.

Various studies reject BRICS based on divergence among member states. Sharma (2012) dismisses any extensive consideration of BRICS, instead concluding that "no idea has done more to muddle thinking about the global economy than that of the BRICS" (Sharma, 2012: 4). Stephens (2011) advises that "it's time to bid farewell to the Brics" due to its states having different political systems. Some argue that despite its potential (Deguat, 2015; Kähkönen, 2013) internal differences, such as trade and policy differentiation (Cameron, 2011; Pant, 2013) are too great to amount to any real international force. Laïdi (2012) argues that historical distrust among members stands in BRICS' way. The common line among analyses dismissing BRICS, apart from their Western origin, is a point of departure that avoids assessing the claims of the group, its rationale and determinations. Instead, these conclude upon what BRICS is not: an economic bloc that has growth in common (Armijo, 2007; Sparks, 2013); unable to modify international order due to its weak institutionalisation (Kähkönen, 2013). Furthermore, BRICS is often simply dismissed as a feeble antagonist to the West. Pant's (2013) titular designation is

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<sup>2</sup> Discussed on page 37.



that BRICS is a “fallacy”, concluding that it is no more than an “artificial construct – merely an acronym coined by an investment banking analyst” (Pant, 2013: 103).

The second analytical orientation is to discern BRICS according to individual member states. These deliberate upon similarities and differences, aggregating the whole from the parts. These studies provide limited insight of BRICS, as a whole, offering simplified appraisals. Peitz (2015) prompts BRICS’ collective importance to be based upon its internal policy cohesion. Ferdinand (2014a; 2014b) suggests outright foreign policy coherence among the states, based upon voting at the UNGA. Adriana (2013) simply sees BRICS as an economic club, justified by the economic growth of individual states, while Lo and Hiscock (eds., 2014) examine economic developments as bringing BRICS together in a time of geopolitical change. There has been an increased appreciation of BRICS consisting of diverging states seeking united goals. Thies and Nieman (2017) use *role theory* to assess change in the international arena and theoretical realism to conduct their analysis. The authors assess identity and behaviour, producing a useful theoretical contribution of emerging powers, their roles and interplay. Stuenkel (2013) offers a concise account of how BRICS transformed itself from an investment category into a political entity, stating that members opportunely used economic clout at a time of global recession to launch the group.

Papa’s (2013) compelling claim that there is a perception gap between what BRICS is and how it has been projected, assesses BRICS as a feature of global governance. Petropoulos (2013) suggests that BRICS emerged as a multiplier of power in global governance based on the increased economic strength of member states at the time of the 2008 global financial crisis. This view sees power translated as subsequent influence on regional and global governance (Armijo and Roberts, 2014), with individual states together shaping the balance of power. BRICS’ strategic convergence has evolved and redefined the transnational order, ensuring a new paradigm for global governance (Shaw, 2015). BRICS’ cooperation functions as a multiplier of power, its individual states are increasingly emerging as global and regional leaders, combining to form a leadership bloc (Kingah and Quiliconi (eds., 2016). De Coning et al (eds., 2015) look at the member states to assess their influence on global order. They conclude that BRICS, through collaboration

and diffusion, constrains hegemony. BRICS brings divergent states together in common action as an alternative vision of maintaining order, while ensuring stability in the global system (De Coning et al, 2015; Kornegay and Bohler-Muller, eds., 2013).

Laïdi (2011) provides a historical rationalisation of BRICS through an appraisal of individual states. BRICS is presented as a centrally disaggregated geopolitical coalition, employing globalisation to promote the objective of sovereign power. Nye's (1990) concept of *soft power*<sup>3</sup> has broadly been applied to assess individual states' persuasive capacities. Chatin and Gallarotti (eds., 2018) bring together comparative analyses on individual states' soft power, assessing the changing international system. In this volume Stuenkel (2018) concludes that though the group is systematically developing its soft power institutionalisation, there is little parity between member states. They are also far from rivalling the soft power of Western powers. The volume concludes with a useful theoretical contribution of how BRICS' collective soft power manifests as compounded, from the organisation to the states. This exposé is however restricted by its discussion, not of group endeavours, but of national examples. The study resolves that the BRICS platform expediently shapes the image and power of member states. Diversity in the group produces influence, but soft power is problematic as its meaning is applied from a narrow understanding (Gallarotti, 2018).

Bond and Garcia's (2015) systematic critical analysis of BRICS is next to none. The study warns that BRICS is an elitist formation. That BRICS is replicating the neo-liberal features of power in a *sub-imperialist* fashion, usurping power from below. This book holds much value in critically discerning BRICS and guides analytical study of the implicated countries.

The final category of literature is the most consequential. It examines BRICS as a unit. These studies generally recognise BRICS as a poorly defined intergovernmental political platform that seeks reform (Chardell, 2015), purposed to advance state interests (Käkönen, 2013) and to systematically (soft) balance unilateral hegemony (De Souza

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<sup>3</sup> "when one country gets other countries to want what it wants, might be called co-optive or soft power in contrast with the hard or command power of ordering others to do what it wants" (Nye, 1990: 166).

Almeida, 2015). Soft balancing<sup>4</sup> is expediently used by Besada and Tok (2014) to advance BRICS as an economic, not political, forum, while Skak (2011) looks at BRIC countries individually, concluding that soft balancing is ineffective to discern the group.

Stuenkel (2015) provides an expanded overview of BRICS. His book achieves its goal of delivering “a definitive reference history of the BRICS as a term and as an institution – a chronological, fact-focused narrative and analytical account of the BRICS concept from its inception in 2001 to the political grouping it is today” (Stuenkel, 2015: xi). Stuenkel’s account delivers an authoritative introduction to discerning BRICS, per se.

BRICS is submitted as an oppositional force to international hegemony, advancing a contemporary model for international exchange. It is presented as increasingly converting into a progressive force towards equitable intergovernmental interaction (Haibin, 2013), not in opposition to the established international order. It seeks global reform (Kornegay and Bohler-Muller, eds., 2013). This counters Brütsch and Papa’s (2013) appraisal of BRICS as a revisionist threat to international order, lacking strategy and cohesion. BRICS’ consolidation into a significant geopolitical entity has already contributed to a shift in the world system (Naik, 2016). Mudunuru (2013) discusses BRICS’ historical foundation, its development and implication on global governance, suggesting the unipolar world ended with BRICS’ emergence.

The diffusion of power has however not been resolved. Though Schweller (2011) does not address BRICS as such, his discussion on the role of emerging states in the transition towards multipolar world order is instructive. Rewizorski’s (2015) perception of a budding Group of Seven (G7), Group of Twenty (G20), BRICS triad, driven non-institutionally by trans-governmental summit diplomacy accords post unipolar thinking of global governance. Herein the G7’s power projection is mirrored by BRICS, with the G20 playing an overlapping, middle ground; each pole performing an interdependent, yet external role from the other; intimating the performance and relationship of an ascending

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<sup>4</sup> Soft balancing relates to “actions that do not directly challenge...but that use nonmilitary tools to delay, frustrate, and undermine” unilateral policies by “using international institutions, economic statecraft, and diplomatic arrangements” (Pape, 2005: 11).

intergovernmental global order. BRICS is presented as a pole and catalyst to post-Western international order; increasingly having a potent impact on global governance evolution, not revolution.

Baracuhy (2012) asserts that the geopolitical transition from a unipolar to a multipolar order is assured. Of import is whether “established powers” will “accept the institutionalized reform” (Baracuhy, 2012: 13). The “real issue arising from this shift in the global balance of power”, says the author, “concerns the relationship between power and international order” (Baracuhy, 2012: 1). This relationship is definitively steered by the different parties; in order to comprehend the evolution of power, the strategies of different parties must be understood. BRICS’ shared political objective is to transcend allied behaviour and liberal idealism, returning real power to the sovereign state (Laïdi, 2012). Such interests and relationships between emerging powers show strategies and intent of shaping international order (Hurrell, 2006). BRICS activities question the legitimacy<sup>5</sup> of international institutions and decision making, demanding a re-evaluation of the relationships between state actors in constructing norms. BRICS doesn’t present revolutionary aspirations; it pursues being a compelling force in the reconfiguration of global order (Noesselt, 2016).

BRICS’ presentations help comprehend the direction the world is heading (Armijo and Roberts, 2014). It has great potential, but in order to understand change, Chardell (2015) stresses the need to first thoroughly delineate and discern the bloc, per se.

The articulation that BRICS forms a bloc is widely spread (Lo and Hiscock, eds., 2014; Hulbert and Brütsch, 2012; Gallarotti, 2018; Kingah and Quiliconi, eds., 2016; Stuenkel, 2015). This has led to the perception that for BRICS to be successful it must act as a bloc, “overcome their differences” and “minimize economic and political differences within the group, leading to a real sense of co-operation and co-ordination”; it needs to institutionalise (Singh and Dube, 2013). These articulations are often expanded, conceiving of BRICS as an alliance; seeking to replace the established Western apex alliance. Yet, this is in contradiction to its own proclaimed state realism. Instead, says Tudoroiu (2012) BRICS

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<sup>5</sup> Legitimacy is the property or virtue of being recognised and appraised as genuine or authoritative.

can be best discerned in comparison to the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). This conceptualisation advances BRICS as an international regime, a platform where members cooperate to increase influence of self and group but do not ally. In this view, their limited coherence is of little regard, as their shared international interest plays a substantiating role to their cooperation.

Studies that examine BRICS' behaviour and actions inform centrally on how these interests are advanced. Through an investigation of Russian and Chinese television coverage, Grincheva and Lu (2016) offer an insightful look at BRICS summit diplomacy. This analysis demonstrates the media's framing of summits, but does not discuss the summits as primary sources of state-centric summit diplomacy.

Rather than mediated accounts, BRICS' Statements reveal the group's collective motion to instructively stabilise, not upset, the international order, ensuring effective execution (Chatin and Gallarotti, eds., 2018). Its Statements emphasise the United Nations' (UN) role in international relations and world order based on established international law (Bohler-Muller, 2014). BRICS' *brand* emerges from the selected themes of its summit Declarations (De Kock, 2015).

Kirton and Larionova (eds., 2018) focus on political transitions, as well as great power politics. They offer a historical understanding of BRICS development, detailing the mechanisms of BRICS' cooperation, based on countries' interests and priorities. The book builds on Larionova and Shelepov (2015), as well as Kirton's (2015) quantitative presentation of BRICS countries' positive compliance to summit commitments, informing upon state dynamics and priorities. The authors argue that global governance is increasingly decided by the range of agents involved. These relations are playing out at a growing number of intergovernmental institutions; BRICS develops a multilateral summit institution within the established international system. Larionova (2018) assesses the slow pace of reform at existing institutions, suggesting that the diffusion of global governance institutions would breathe new life into global strategic power shifts<sup>6</sup>. Through

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<sup>6</sup> The text offers a potentially useful outline of BRICS' role in global governance. However, the full text is inaccessible as it is only available in Russian.

quantitative as well as qualitative analyses Shelepov (2015) finds that instead of impairing, BRICS favourably operates together with established institutions. Its own institutionalisation has not resulted in its Statements producing fewer references to established institutions. Instead of working against anyone, the study proves that BRICS seeks broader collaboration.

Pashentsev (2015) remarks that national strategic communications produce signification of blocs and transgovernmental associations. The author suggests that summit Statements and high profile meetings construct persuasive institutional narratives. Wu and Alden (2014) view BRICS' persuasion through a public diplomacy lens. The authors provide insightful comment on BRICS attraction, suggesting that it focuses on public perception and intergroup trust, transcending state centrality and the limited soft power concept. Soft power is shown to be greatly misappropriated. Critically, it is a concept "to forge a new US narrative of international affairs to give meaning to the post-Cold War era and help foreign policy makers navigate their way through this new order" (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle, 2013: 3). Nye's concept has itself become an appliance of soft power: it invariably advances American foreign policy. It should not be misappropriated nor simply applied at random, where persuasion is involved. This is especially true for BRICS, which fundamentally pursues extra-Western influence; the development of its own applicable abstraction would assist in its interpretation.

Bohler-Muller (2014) suggests the use of *multilateral diplomacy*, in lieu of soft power. This is instructive. As is Van Noort's (2017) use of Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle's (2013) *strategic narratives*: representations of meaning, tools to achieve political influence. She writes that "in the battle of narratives to give meaning to the international system in the twenty-first century, emerging powers are actively engaged" (Van Noort, 2017: 121). This study examines BRICS summit Declarations to provide keen insight into the contest of narratives; how BRICS attempts to reshape the international order. Van Noort suggests that due to its "partial compliance with the narrative grammatical rules, the BRICS group may not effectively influence and gain public support" (Van Noort, 2017: 121). Her study of BRICS employs a rigorous theoretical codification. The application of strategic narratives is instructive, but meaning is confined by method, little emerges

organically from the texts assessed. While strategic narratives provide a useful alternative design to soft power, its confined theoretical application remains confounded by the construct itself.

Peitz' (2015) simplistic dichotomy: "The BRICS: Rhetoric or Reality?" affirms that BRICS "should be taken serious" as "a meaningful group", through policy cohesion and a soft balancing strategy (Peitz, 2015). While the author approves BRICS' potential impact on global order, her separation between 'rhetoric' and 'reality' produces a false dichotomy. Similarly, Brütsch and Papa (2013), discern that for BRICS to be persuasive it must form a traditional alliance. The authors decry BRICS' "rhetoric of coalitional behaviour", saying that without manifest material alliance "BRICS' geopolitical play will be defeated by their own tactical ploys" (Brütsch and Papa, 2013: 299). Interestingly, Kahn's (2018) investigation of BRICS' science, technology and innovation cooperation finds that member states collaborate more with Western partners than among each other. His findings illuminate that instead of material cooperation BRICS' inter-group strategy is more about the rhetoric of cooperation.

Kahn's is a useful insight, as it emerges from the literature that instead of receiving the appropriate appraisal, BRICS' rhetoric is mostly neglected or rejected. To distinguish its approach and strategy it is clear that its rhetoric requires closer examination. These practical assessments transcend theoretical application. Schweller and Pu (2011) discuss rhetoric centrally in their study of changing world order. The authors examine China (rather than BRICS) and its resistance discourse, or delegitimising<sup>7</sup> rhetoric. They suggest that the shift from unipolarity is a complex procedure and that rhetoric is central in achieving reform while maintaining stability. Balancing global power structures can quickly be seen as revisionism or revolution. "Hence, concentrated power within the unipole is not the only obstacle that states seeking a balance must overcome; they must overcome the revisionist label attached to any state seeking to restore global equilibrium" (Schweller and Pu, 2011: 44). These conditions potentially make BRICS' rhetoric all the more sophisticated.

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<sup>7</sup> In this dissertation the words legitimating/delegitimating and legitimation/delegitimation are preferred to its synonyms legitimising/delegitimising and legitimisation/delegitimation, respectively.

Naik's (2016) study is one of the few that points to communication being key to BRICS' strategy. Its "efforts to raise its status and create a multipolar world" says the author, indicate that "member countries have raised an alternative common voice at the Global fora. The members' zest in organizing a common platform for addressing several common issues proves the possibility of a world order that is not dictated by single player" (Naik, 2016). Duggan (2015) uses *constructivist role theory* to locate BRICS as an effective force towards a new global governance agenda, resolving that BRICS have joined to form a new narrative. Gallarotti's (2018) assessment is that this narrative is broad and elusive. "The language tends to be general in its prescriptions and resolutions" (Gallarotti, in Chatin and Gallarotti, eds., 2018: 149).

Among the various examinations of BRICS, few explore its strategic persuasions. Few discuss BRICS' rhetoric, thereby providing a rationale and basis for this dissertation. De Souza Almeida provides a fitting point of departure for this study. The author concludes:

"BRICS's political policy is to soft balance the US, or in other words, to conduct a systematic strategy of external balance...Political rhetoric has been an important instrument to unite the BRICS. In the short run, the BRICS aim at soft balancing US power...through some sort of new smart power politics that has not been well understood and investigated by most scholars world wide. If the alliance is successful soft balancing the US, the BRICS will gain an unprecedented political power" (De Souza Almeida, 2015: 10).

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The state of the art conveys the clear need for scholarly signification of BRICS strategies, per se. BRICS has been conceptualised and discussed broadly. Yet, its *raison d'être*, its strategic actuality, rendered through its communications, remain largely unexplored. Examination of the constituent states is limiting; the forest cannot be seen for the trees. Discerning BRICS requires a systematic and comprehensive exploration of its essence; its claims, acumen and purpose. Its rationale materialises through its own transmissions; its rhetoric holds its strategic intent.



## THESIS STATEMENT

This dissertation contributes to filling the analytical gap concerning BRICS' strategic communications. It explores BRICS' persuasive strategies and strategic persuasions. BRICS is a networked intergovernmental regime. Through it member states pursue interests of increased power through actualising reform while ensuring stability in the international order.

BRICS engenders the reform it seeks by embodying the normative international order through its rhetorical performances. These public diplomacy performances inspire confidence and influence. BRICS displays the standards and values of the international system, in order to occupy the territory of international governance, the strategic environment. To mould and then achieve its ends BRICS articulates the status quo through its own claims, disturbing the hegemonic inertia and launching its own narrative interpretation into the global consciousness. BRICS does not present the manifestation of a new world order or leadership under a new *Consensus*. Instead, through expressing its desires it performs the concepts and maxims of the established order. In doing so it reshapes and reforms it according to the interests of its member states.

BRICS' initiatives move the global order towards greater power diffusion, resulting in a system where its members occupy greater, more equitable, international authority. It does not propose new international norms, nor does it greatly construct the institutions through which to do so. None of its instruments or formations directly challenges established institutions. Instead, as an agent of global power its actions complement existing infrastructure and contribute to evolutionary reform. It proposes that the embodied networked order between its members represent a version of equitable, multilateral order. Its congenial interactions, agreements and formulations display a pluralist international arrangement based on mutual benefit. The member states present their interaction in BRICS as a fair model for international exchange, suggesting this to be an alternative to the current system; BRICS forms an avenue between the current and succeeding international reality.

BRICS' decentralised position affords member states a supplementary terrain to advance its shared interests and execute its independent wills, external to the obligation of the state. Member states assume no external authority. BRICS strategically advances its aims of global reform by rhetorically embodying the order it aspires; it uses rhetoric as a technology of power. Its strategic communication both motivates as well as actualises its desired reform.

Central to BRICS and this dissertation is how perception is steered and shaped. BRICS seeks recognition for its member states as powerful and legitimate. To do so it introduces and advances a systematic reset. It re-embodies the UN-led international order that emerged after the Second World War; a space where no singular state occupies global hegemonic power. BRICS opposes the current order, indirectly challenging the unipolar, core-periphery modality; where a few states linked to the United States of America (US) dominate the international realm.

BRICS instead presents an alternative, extra-Western global narrative, seated in established norms and principles. From within the legitimate international domain, it produces an independent scenario. It advances a cordial modality of intergovernmentalism, based on cooperation and exchange between sovereign states. Its emphasis on sovereignty manifests it outside of external influence and returns agency (away from international institutions) to the states as authoritative and legitimate power centres. Its' diffused, apportioned system of governance is an execution of a networked intergovernmental order, an evolution of strategic realism, and a modern balance of powers where states pursue regions of influence. It remains in BRICS' central interest that the stable, networked order through which its member states have developed remains. This is the fundamental foundation for its strategy.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

The value of studying BRICS as a modern formation is to allow for a new understanding of the formations that shape the present and future global condition. As a product of the current global order BRICS offers a mirror reflection to global matters that are often difficult to see through conventional theoretical lenses or those that keep singular,

disaggregated states as their focus. This study is aimed towards adding conceptual clarity of BRICS as a significant and possibly decisive component of contemporary global relations. To date there is no critical assessment of how BRICS constructs and communicates its means and ways towards its strategic goals. This topical study allows conceptualisation of an increasingly important global forum. By exploring and evaluating BRICS' strategic communications, this dissertation significantly contributes to explaining what BRICS actually is; discernment of its reach for political influence and its attempt to produce global reform. It offers an original, analytical exploration.

Instead of espousing or bestowing annotative theoretical underpinnings, the research assesses BRICS documentation in order to inform its impact on the nexus of evolving geopolitical, structural, legal, organisational, ideological and hemispherical power relations. BRICS is used by its member states as a supplementary mechanism while actively sustaining their obligations within established institutions. It functions in the geostrategic domain of governance, where control of perception and persuasion are paramount. Accordingly, BRICS' strategies illuminate how it wishes to be perceived and what role it plays in transforming the present; shaping and actualising that which is to come. While various studies view changes in relations, few focus on emerging states' collective strategic attempts to bring about a reformed order.

Member states, through BRICS, significantly conceive the global South not in lieu of the North, but in and of itself; transcending its perceived inequitable positions by claiming independence and power. BRICS' documentation offers its own voice, an approach that transcends Western conventions and lenses. BRICS significantly shapes itself external to Western involvement, producing a paradigm of post-unipolar materiality. This dissertation contributes to an extra-Western and by implication de-Westernising academic lens. It adds to the navigation of global power relations in an era of increasing geopolitical flux. The maturation or development of BRICS will take the international order into uncharted territories. BRICS not only plays a substantiating role in shifting the power arrangement but through it this shift can be understood: it provides a paradigm through which to perceive of the nature of global power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. BRICS may not be an end in this regard, but the ways through which the ensuing arrangement comes about. Discerning

BRICS contributes to the emerging geopolitical realism. It informs the evolution of great power politics, the challenges faced by both established and emerging powers, the control of international organisations and the utility of institutions.

Finally, though BRICS membership is only a constituent of members' larger foreign policies, it does offer compelling complementary insight of their strategies, significantly the ostensible assumption and projection of Chinese power. China's unfamiliar embrace of global responsibility, its increasing championing of the universal, networked approach under President Xi *vis-à-vis* the inward national design of US president Trump, lays bare an unfolding modern strategic reality.

## **LIMITATIONS**

This study is strictly limited to, as well as by, BRICS' documented communications. The restriction to primary source analysis is done to allow an authoritative and definitive description. This is also due to there being no foundational examination of its rhetorical formulations to work from. Focus on primary, *track one* (official government diplomacy) documents provide for analysis of authoritative communication. It results in other aspects, such as function and organisation only being examined when it features textually. Furthermore, *track two* formations such as the BRICS Business Council, Academic Forum and Civil Forum have been averted, yet these could produce valuable insight to separate rhetorical studies.

The discussion of BRICS persuasion entails a positive determination to descriptively interpret results. This may ensue in an overconcentration on qualifying reasoning and a lack of counterposing critique. BRICS' strategy is determined as such, there is no official external measure or comparison to it. The dissertation does not adopt measurable methodologies to establish internal performance and success. The primacy of BRICS ensures that inconsistencies and tensions among member states are not assessed. The dissertation only partially discusses outcomes and the tangible discharge of BRICS' obligations.

The focus on publically propagated documents serves an explicit assessment. It evaluates the components used to materialise its strategy in the mind of global publics. Though this circumscribed view is substantial, a broader analysis of the fora that produce the outcome documents would prove valuable. Furthermore, a reciprocating study that examines how BRICS is perceived would inform upon strategic practice and effect.

Though all official public communications are released in English, policymakers and scholars from BRICS and other states produce research that could be of value to this study. However, due to their use of languages unfamiliar to this author they are inaccessible here.

Though the selected methodology assists in the establishment of criteria for evaluation, the dissertation does not produce models that can be repeated or generalised, nor do these methods produce completely unbiased statistically verifiable results. The sole qualitative approach results in no direct quantification of the findings; the study is confined to the researcher's reading and application of critical tools. While it is inappropriate for this particular study, a mixed methods and even a quantitative approach could contribute to further analyses.

## **ANALYTICAL CONTENT**

The state of the art indicates that BRICS proper has broadly been studied as a reaction to the current state of global affairs. Logos and motif, which have thus far greatly been neglected, are central in this research. BRICS' documents produce significant indicators and afford a valuable lens through which it, within the contemporary international situation, can be understood. Critically, global power contentions are increasingly engaged through persuasion and influence, rather than kinetic forms of warfare. BRICS communication forms the foundation of what it wants for itself and the world; it generates organisational strategy. The texts exemplify the norms, laws, principles, behaviours, structures and intentions that BRICS promotes, advancing other international bodies to accordingly adopt. Through these, it presents and executes international leadership. The texts function as rhetorical transfer, projecting praise and blame, shaping attitudes and evoking a response.

The scope of the dissertation emerges from relevant meetings and subsequent documentation. The first official meetings to produce publically available records took place in 2008, the most recent to be included in this study come from 2017. English is the organisational language of BRICS meetings. It is therefore that official BRICS documentation is composed and released in English, providing for an expanded global audience.

This study examines the primary documentation to emerge from track one discussions among high-level national leaders; examining how it projects and composes itself at the highest level of diplomacy. These documents are all publically available and widely distributed. This study sourced the majority of relevant materials directly from the website of the *BRICS Information Centre* at the University of Toronto<sup>8</sup>. The corpus of BRIC/BRICS documentation is parted into three conceptual categories: 1) programmatic; 2) organic; 3) opportunistic.

Programmatic documents (Memoranda of Understanding, agreements, treaties and Action Plans) establish a step by step course of action. These are systematic, foundational formations; they establish and therefore advocate a definitive, structured process to be followed. These documents claim common ground, presenting a tangible formation that composes BRICS' as a legitimate arrangement. This is a display of leadership, influencing and exemplifying exchange among international bodies. These are ways to demonstrate favourable relationships. Programmes are canvasses for strategic means. These are the norms and principles that BRICS espouses. Hereby it projects itself as norm and principle-oriented, prompting others to follow its lead. Programmatic documents develop meaning and reflect order, setting out a specific undertaking and timeframe. These are appeals to logic and reason, establishing standards.

Organic documents (summit Declarations) signify the functioning of BRICS. These documents legitimate BRICS' value and significance, rejecting opposing international forces. Here BRICS establishes and shapes itself, reflecting its properties and thought; pursuing its strategies. These form part of BRICS' permanent organisation and are

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<sup>8</sup> Available at [www.brics.utoronto.ca](http://www.brics.utoronto.ca)

instrumental in achieving its ends. These are often appeals to values and character, using summit diplomacy to signify BRICS' embodiment of preferred international order.

Opportunistic documents (Finance Ministry Joint Communiqués, Statements from Foreign Ministers meetings on the sidelines of the UNGA and Statements from informal meetings of BRICS leaders ahead of G20 Summits) are structured to seek and seize benefit. These texts exploit the fact that all member states are participants of these multilateral gatherings. As unit BRICS opportunistically responds to the event, shaping and framing it through releasing joint responses. Through mutual recognition of legitimate, legal proceedings and concepts BRICS pursues influence, attains recognition and channels perceptions. These texts construct a voice in a sphere of influence outside its own; maximising interest while bearing no responsibility. They capitalise on the international makeup with appeals to emotion and obligation, boosting its own credibility.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Methodology regards how knowledge is gained. It encompasses the techniques used to ensure the research goal is attained (Mouton, 1996). This dissertation offers a critical rhetorical analysis. Rhetorical analyses are inductive and innovative; crossing disciplines yet are always located in context (space and time). It is therefore of practical insight and relevance. Rhetorical criticism goes further than modern articulations such as discourse analysis; it directly looks at the agent and its power, eclipsing pure discourse analysis, which assesses how language builds perspective. Rhetorical analyses assess the strategies behind stylistic and linguistic choice; they look at broader processes, seeing the world shaped by discourses and vice versa (Andrus, 2013: 1). As rhetorical analyses are pragmatic so too this dissertation applies concepts and tools from political communication, strategic studies, public diplomacy and international relations, among others, making it more robust. The dissertation assesses BRICS' styles, appeals and constructions, but does not apply a set type of analysis. Instead, meaning and relevance are discovered, emerging from the text. The texts are assessed through context and timing, but also borrows from disciplines such as law, political science and international studies. The dissertation applies realist concepts throughout. It does so in response to the texts. The study is not simply situated in the realist school of thought. Instead, it

recognises an evolving, interconnected web of actors. A system where not only the nodes (state and non-state actors), but the networks and linkages are increasingly interconnected and empowered.

The art of rhetoric assesses how communication is used to further and achieve an aim. The investigation commences with philosophical observations that regard the nature of persuasion in specific situations. Such contextual interpretations indicate the transfer of concepts and constructs across space and time. A rhetorical assessment is suitable to explore BRICS, itself a rhetorical unit. Rhetoric is strategic: it defends an answer. In order to discern BRICS, it is imperative to examine its persuasive strategies; strategy is regarded in terms of means, ways and ends. To do this the research looks at the different ways in which rhetorical persuasion is used, how language makes ideas operational (means) and what organisational purposes it serves (ends). Rhetorical analysis is applicable here as it facilitates the exploration of BRICS' strategy. The direct investigation of primary literature identifies and describes its characteristics, contributing to comprehensive and original research.

The dissertation commences with an introduction and orientation of international strategy. It outlines the modern strategic environment and briefly discusses China and Russia accordingly. This chapter then presents an overview of how BRICS came about, its foundations, history and formation. Leading into the broader analysis BRICS is expanded as rhetorical and strategic formation; both these concepts are discussed here.

This orientation is followed by three substantial analytical chapters, assessing the three conceptual categories of the documentary corpus. All three analytical chapters introduce and adapt their own methodologies to focus on BRICS' approach.

The first chapter, on programmatic documentation, assesses BRICS schematic formation. Programmes are assessed as building illustrative scenarios, establishing positions, orientations and aspirations. The construction of scenarios is closely associated with that of organisational narratives. The study uses narrative to locate BRICS in the competition for global influence. The grounding in international law, its norms and concepts are assessed due to its demonstrable value in BRICS' foundations. In order to



assess how these scenarios and narratives are built BRICS agreements are critically analysed for stylistic operation. BRICS' legitimating and delegitimizing tactics towards reform, such as disruption, cooperation, leadership, its latent multi-institutional approach and multipolarity are appraised as programming its vision and purpose.

Organic documentation is systematically assessed for their constructive aspects. International relations theories such as regime theory and network theory are applied, as are other realist aspects to appraise its summit diplomacy; national interests, legitimacy and sovereignty are central to understand BRICS. Theory on leadership and international law expound BRICS' approaches to hegemony, independence and reform. Furthermore, global governance, intergovernmental network theory and soft balancing further help discern BRICS as a geostrategic forum.

The final analysis, of opportunistic documents, thoroughly employs rhetorical concepts. Here BRICS reacts, seeking benefit. The chapter looks at the tools used to secure influence. Recognition indicates BRICS' desire to belong, establishing influence as insiders and in turn seeking identification. Recognition is closely related to political territorialisation, the process of displacing power and order. Timing (kairos) and exigency contribute to assessing BRICS' Statements as rhetorical situations. Opportunistic documents are seen as displays, for this reason mimesis and the epideictic are considered central. Finally, the chapter conducts a thorough assessment of BRICS' rhetorical style.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **AN ORIENTATION OF STRATEGY AND BRICS**

“At its essence, strategy is an intellectual construct linking where you are today with where you want to be tomorrow in a substantive, concrete manner”.

Gordon Sullivan and Michael Harper (Sullivan and Harper, 1996: 99)

#### **INTRODUCTION**

BRICS is a rhetorical and strategic formation. This chapter proposes an orientation of how the strategic nexus underlying BRICS’ communication is analysed. It also explains and details how central concepts are understood and applied in the dissertation. The chapter is presented as two, interlinked parts. The first section composes a perception of strategy, detailing how strategy is employed here. It defines and discerns the relevant concepts and contexts. It does so by sketching the prevailing international strategic realm<sup>9</sup>, via a constituting exposé of two leading BRICS states: China and Russia. The second part offers an overview of BRICS’ historical origins. It discusses the strategic circumstances and proceedings which led to its formation. While its form is new, its goals are not. Background and structure of the realm into which BRICS is incorporated then provide the context for the subsequent analyses.

#### **STRATEGY**

##### **i) DISCERNING STRATEGY**

Strategy regards how (ways) power is applied (means or resources) to achieve desired objectives (ends) (Yarger, 2006a). Values and norms underpin these ways, means and ends. Strategy requires conscious consideration and judgment, it is the realm of

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<sup>9</sup> According to Salazar (2017) realm “refers to the political meaning of ‘rule’: A ‘ruler’ traces the perimeter within which the ‘realm’ coheres and thus provides ‘direction’ to its citizens so that they interact ‘rightfully’ under the ‘rule of law’” (Salazar, 2017).

leadership; warfare is its ancient home. While the agent is often located in a broader domain, strategy is not mere management or reaction, but the proactive application of power to steer towards the control and then the maintenance of the strategic environment. This environment is the domain in which states and other leaderships interact, where interests are advanced; “strategy is subordinate to the nature of the strategic environment” (Yarger, 2006b: 7). It is the composite context “that influence the success of the state in relation to the physical world, other states and actors, chance, and the possible futures...To be successful, the strategist must comprehend the nature of the strategic environment and construct strategy that is consistent with it, neither denying its nature nor capitulating to other actors or to chance” (Yarger, 2006b: 17).

The strategic environment is closely related to the strategic territory or simply territory. The environment is the space but also the conditions, components and circumstances which shape the space. The environment is broader than the territory. To shape the environment one must first occupy territory; a place to motion from. A territory is a space occupied by an authority, a space under control becomes a territory. Territories are spaces where agents execute their rule. In this dissertation, the agents are the sovereign nation-states. A strategy is, therefore, a plan of action, directing persuasion or coercion, to occupy territory and to achieve interests. While interests may be permanent, the space and environment in which interests are pursued changes. Effective strategy evolves and adapts in order to occupy the territory.

Arguably the first recorded contemplations on what today is called strategy were that of the ancient Chinese military scholar Sun Tzu. His musings on strategy have inspired the thought which later became known as the Taoism; the ideal life is lived in harmony with the Tao, or the appropriate *way*. The Tao (the harmonious, dynamic path) is discovered through the reflection of all circumstances and possibilities. The means, ways and ends interact holistically, with the natural condition of each not being stable, but in constant flux. The superior path flows in and towards balance; the natural order of things. It is pursued by the systematic application of whatever ensures this preferable outcome. Sun Tzu described the ideal strategist as one enlightened accordingly; one who is able to act through inaction, distilling complexity, returning to harmony. Through poetic

suggestion, Sun Tzu evokes meaning without clear instruction (Horwath, 2006). His meditations sketch scenarios which indicate the superiority of minimum force and psychological persuasion. The supreme art of war, he said, was to subdue the enemy without coercion; the war should already be won before the physical battle is invoked. To him victory does not arise from fighting for the establishment of a fixed outcome. Such a stable form cannot be constructed as change is constant. Superior strategy guides the preferable flow of events.

As Sun Tzu did in ancient China, the military strategist Carl Von Clausewitz did in 19<sup>th</sup> century Prussia. He illuminated strategy as the psychological and political aspects of war. However, differing from Sun Tzu's evocation of the path least active, of minimum force and persuasion, the fellow scholar-executive Von Clausewitz was a realist of the Hegelian dialectical approach. His synthesis was one of all-out-war; ends achieved by force and direct subjugation, vis-à-vis Sun Tzu's indirect approach. Von Clausewitz' thesis was that war is the act of force, compelling an enemy to one's will. To this his antithesis and famed aphorism: "war is the continuation of politics by other means", found that war is politics, configured (Horwath, 2006). To Von Clausewitz strategy is the direct use of the battle to win the war. He concluded that the key to success is to always present a campaign built on strength and surprise, the latter will expose the enemy, allowing the former to prevail through maximum force (Von Ghyczy, von Oetinger and Bassford, 2001).

## **ii) THE MAKING OF THE MODERN STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT**

The illustration of Sun Tzu and Von Clausewitz respectively demonstrate the expression of persuasion (indirect action) and coercion (direct action). While not exclusive to the other these are the central ways in which resources are applied to achieve interests. One is not necessarily *better* than the other. More than anything choice depends on the strategic environment. The modern strategic environment has been shaped by technological advance. These developments, primarily the Mutually Assured Destruction<sup>10</sup> of nuclear warfare, usurped the direct, kinetic approach. In the nuclear age, direct international

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<sup>10</sup> Mutually Assured Destruction is the doctrine suggesting that two opposing nuclear-enabled powers would both be deterred from deploying their weapons. The use by one would be responded to in turn by the other, causing complete annihilation.

confrontations between major (nuclear) states have been obviated. Their and their affiliates' strategies have since been greatly indirect. British military theoretician Basil Henry Liddell Hart (1967) transcended the Clausewitzian coercive battle for the physical terrain by proposing that superior strategy works not towards winning the battle, but "looks beyond the war to the subsequent peace" (Liddell Hart, 1967: 335). In the age of Mutually Assured Destruction, it is strategically imperative to be central, first in the production and then in the leadership of the strategic environment; determining the values and norms that underpin and guide the realm. Simply put: deciding on and then shaping a 'truth'. In the period following the World Wars, the UN in affiliation with international organisations has been legitimated by member states to shape and steer the strategic environment. This realm is collectively mandated as the global authority for multilateral peace and harmony.

While the UN has pursued order through its security and diplomacy mechanisms, international powers have continued their own pursuit for influence. The singular authority of the UN has ensured that the indirect approach to steering the international strategic environment has become central to aspiring superpowers; the competition between powers ensuing in a struggle for the leadership of international norms and principles, as well as multilateral international organisations. The last great power antagonism, known as the Cold War for the very reason that its leading protagonists did not directly confront each other, was a confrontation for appropriating the terrain and steering the strategic environment.

The end of the bifurcated world of two competing blocs has effectively ensured the singular leadership of the global strategic environment under US hegemonic unilateralism. Its truth, its national values and principles, what it regards as legitimate, has become the international standard, the universal truth. On account of there being no direct independent contender, the global strategic environment has been comprehensively dominated from one side; the majority of states have been inculcated into Western Liberal Capitalism. Under US leadership the norms and principles of the international order have increasingly become understood as those internal to the US. These ideal types have been spread, imposed and naturalised globally in an effort to

legitimate Western norms as international norms, a grand strategy of capturing the global strategic environment.

A true strategy is only there where true independence is expressed; commanding territory and challenging for apportioned control of the strategic environment. Under a hegemonic global power, states must claim and act upon its independence; true independence is seized by occupying sovereign territory and determining sovereign truth. In order to do so, states must employ strategy towards its interests. This, however, does not hold for the hegemon. When there is a separate competition for the strategic environment the hegemon does not employ strategy but instead uses tactics to defend and manage the situation, the environment. As long as no opponent expressly claims international territory through independent power, there is no true strategy.

Subsequent to the Cold War there has been no clear great power struggle for global leadership. While Soviet belligerence has folded, nuclear weapons in Russia and around the world remain potent. Realism and realpolitik may have sunk into a slumber, but history did not end, as prophesied by Francis Fukuyama (1992). Member states employ BRICS to shape the modern strategic reality; it is an attempt by the individual states to claim their independence and terrain. These motions indirectly challenge global leadership and dominance over the global strategic environment. In order to assess BRICS' strategy to disrupt US hegemony and claim power<sup>11</sup>, it is first imperative to perceive the agent that steers the global realm.

In effect the present US strategy and tactics approach, of leading the global strategic environment at all costs, have at least been pursued since the end of the Second World War. The tactical imperative of *containing* Soviet Marxism, and Communism in general, as articulated in the 1947 *X Article*<sup>12</sup>, was exclaimed by Defence Secretary Robert

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<sup>11</sup> See page 45 for details.

<sup>12</sup> The *Sources of Soviet Conduct*, better known as the X Article, appeared in the July 1947 edition of *Foreign Affairs*. Written by George Kennan the article proposed that the Soviet and Communist world does not consider it possible to peacefully coexist with the Capitalist world and must, therefore, be effectively opposed and contained (Kennan, 1947).

McNamara, not as strategy but as crisis management (Dobbs, 2008). Instead, US strategy has consistently been to project leadership.

Global leadership has been its exceptionalist<sup>13</sup> mission; global leadership in the post-War era has been its existential *sine qua non*. It has built authoritative international influence by projecting compelling values and virtues. It has led by the principles of individual justice and material prosperity, advancing Western liberalism as superior to alternative modalities, such as Communist collectivism. It has steered the global ship, while quelling any attempt against its dominance, containing or curtailing the interests and independence of others. When others did not follow its leadership it has tactically moved to impede upon the construction and exercise of their ideological and conceptual formations; preventing nations their actionable independence, forestalling ability to choose. The American scholar Noam Chomsky (2012) suggests this reveals itself when Western discourse refers to Chinese independence in 1949, as the “loss of China” (Chomsky, 2012). Consequentially, American campaigns in Indochina were waged to tactically control the region. This was done out of concern for the ‘domino effect’ or as Henry Kissinger advanced “a region that falls out of control can become a ‘virus’ that will ‘spread contagion’” (Kissinger in Chomsky, 2012). Tactical assaults such as the one on Indochina was to prevent the ‘virus’ of independence from ultimately spreading to the ‘super-domino’: Japan. Were it to become truly autonomous, US influence over Japan would be obviated. Such an order could not be tolerated. To the US it was “clear: destroy the virus and ‘inoculate’ those who might be infected...destroy any hope of successful independent development” (Chomsky, 2012).

While the US maintains its tactical dominance, the global condition has changed since the end of the Cold War, towards a deeply integrated, networked order. It is within this incorporated new system that BRICS states have united to form an indirect pursuit of ‘successful independent development’, beyond the reaches of US tactical power. Within the integrated global order direct belligerence has largely given way to achieving interests through internal persuasion.

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<sup>13</sup> Exceptionalism refers to the perception of a society or country as unique or extraordinary; that it occupies an exceptional position among others.

To stave off attempts for control of the contemporary strategic environment the subsequent 2006 *Y Article* has advanced the development of a *National Strategic Narrative*. It illustrates the importance of indirect, persuasive tactics and forms a way to ensure the preservation of its international leadership. In the preface to a later publication of the *Narrative* the American international law scholar Anne-Marie Slaughter (2011) states that it is imperative that the US remains “the strongest competitor and most influential player in a deeply inter-connected global system, which requires that we invest less in defense and more in sustainable prosperity and the tools of effective global engagement” (Slaughter in Mr Y, 2011). Slaughter’s prompt to ensure the victory of the ‘global engagement’ suggests that it is there that the US will face its toughest challenge.

In the indelibly networked world competition will increasingly be about who directs the comprehensive engagement, the battle for persuasion; who will lead the discursive realm, the global narrative. The development of the *Narrative* recognises this change in the strategic environment: “from control in a closed system to credible influence in an open system”; “from containment to sustainment”; “from deterrence and defense to civilian engagement and competition”; “from zero sum to positive sum global politics/economics” (Mr Y, 2011: 3). In light of the US tactical management (vis-à-vis strategy), these measures present its conceived focal area to constrain and prevail against aspirant opponents.

The US defence doctrine through its Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) illustrates the tactics needed to maintain its supremacy. Corresponding to the “shift of emphasis to meet the new strategic environment”, the QDR motions “from major conventional combat operations – to multiple irregular, asymmetric operations”; “from an emphasis on ships, guns, tanks and planes – to focus on information, knowledge and timely, actionable intelligence” (United States of America, 2006: vii). This focus confirms that its tactical operations are directed at managing the international realm, ensuring that “no foreign power can dictate the terms of regional or global security”, nor can any state be allowed to influence the international order (United States of America, 2006: 30). Such campaigns by other states are referred to as *Irregular Warfare* (IW): “a violent struggle among state and nonstate actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant populations. IW favors



indirect and asymmetric approaches...in order to erode an adversary's power, influence and will...people not platforms and advanced technology, will be the key to IW success" (United States of America, 2007: 1). While IW is described as the terrain of the belligerent, the US advances hybrid warfare, to "secure improved normalcy", to dominate the "nuanced human terrain" of "the conventional battleground; the conflict zone's indigenous population battleground; and the home front and international community battleground" (McCuen, 2008: 107). Hybrid warfare acknowledges the ascendancy of persuasion in the modern strategic environment. It implies "conceptual dimensions...a wider struggle for control and support of the combat zone's indigenous population, the support of the home fronts of the intervening nations, and the support of the international community" (McCuen, 2008: 107).

These battles for persuasion are campaigns to influence the global strategic environment. The 2017 *National Security Strategy*, the guiding document of the US Executive, proposes that "revisionist powers...China and Russia challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity" (Trump, 2017: 2). In order for a state to execute influence beyond its borders it must, upon securing domestic security and stability, possess an independent foreign policy, shaped by internal and external strategic realities. China and Russia's recognition in the *National Security Strategy* point to their possession of independent policies. In order to achieve national interests, their strategies have to proactively shape the international environment. To influence the global domain they must enact independence and international reform; the pursuit of the latter requires the achievement of the former. Both China and Russia predate the modern nation-state. Both employ political infrastructures in order to advance their civilisational, even exceptionalist, ambitions. These states are strategic adaptations, formations to satisfy the dominant international structure, employed to ensure their internal, sovereign integrity and to afford them legitimate international engagement.

The following two sub-sections briefly examine Chinese and Russian strategy in light of independence and international reform. This exploration exhibits their cohering

international pursuits. It demonstrates that while member states are constitutionally different, participation in BRICS serve their individual and shared interests.

### iii) STRATEGIC INDEPENDENCE AND REFORM: CHINA

China's strategy is based on maintaining internal supremacy (true independence). Its modern bivalent power configuration of ruling Communist Party and State works to maintain its singular autonomy, legitimacy in and security from foreign intervention and determination. China's *Tianxia* or *all under heaven* unitary system lasted for 2000 years without the institution of a state. Instead, the Chinese imperial court or the Party today, placed itself at the centre, everything beyond the centre existed in relation to it (Qin, 2007: 9). This holism, refusing dichotomy, is a foundational and philosophical feature, without which China cannot be perceived. Within *Tianxia* everything exists towards consolidation. This total understanding holds that, given territorial domination and international recognition, nothing and no-one external needs to be directly conquered or be brought under dominion. Holism is already the natural order of things – with the Chinese court or Party, at the core. Its inward preponderance means that only in the modern era, after crumbling under dynastic collapse and external intervention, was it forced into adopting an outward orientation and *foreign* policy.

According to official doctrine, it was only in 1949, through the founding of Communist China, that it was again independent of interventionist forces. Revolution definitively brought an end to the preceding era, restoring true sovereignty. The maintenance of singular independence is China's authoritative and definitive strategy. It assays independence by pursuing neutrality and non-intervention in international affairs<sup>14</sup>; it also opposes the perception of the *China Threat*<sup>15</sup> by promoting *Peaceful*

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<sup>14</sup> China rarely vetoes and consistently abstains from UNSC (United Nations Security Council) voting, thereby not "interfering in the domestic affairs of countries or undermining their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity" (Shichor, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> The China Threat is a theory suggesting that China poses a threat to global order. It has centrally been employed by the Chinese as the target of its own Peaceful Development campaign.

*Development*<sup>16</sup>, among other tactics. Its assurance of national interests while progressively engaging the world is summed up in Deng Xiaoping's realist *24 Character Strategy*: "Observe calmly; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; and never claim leadership" (Deng, 2013). The 24 Character Strategy emerged in 1990, in response to the global disintegration of Communist regimes and as pressure mounted on government at the Tiananmen Square protests<sup>17</sup>. It maintained the centrality of domestic command and gave China the space to develop itself, towards assuring self-reliance.

Modern China's international strategy has largely been indirect. Instead, it has focused domestically on accomplishing economic recovery and national rejuvenation. The recently popularised *Chinese Dream* is used as a deliberative slogan towards the restoration of its superior historical position of Zhongguo<sup>18</sup>, the central state (Kotzé, 2017). The Chinese Dream grand narrative is explained by President Xi: "the goal of building China into a modern Socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious can be achieved by 2049, when the PRC (People's Republic of China) marks its centenary; and the dream of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation will then be realized" (Xi, 2014).

Today China is undergoing a shift in foreign policy towards obtaining external influence, pursuing greater direction over the global strategic environment. Increased international engagement under President Xi is exemplified by his World Economic Forum (WEF) speech in 2017, in which he boldly committed China to the centre of global exchange (Xi, 2017). Xi's replacement of the "period of strategic opportunities"<sup>19</sup> for the

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<sup>16</sup> To ensure its domestic security it has constructed an international narrative of Peaceful Development, assuring the world that its ambitions for growth will be harmonious and non-aggressive.

<sup>17</sup> The Tiananmen crackdown refers to the Chinese government's violent suppression of pro-democratic and other protests in and around Tiananmen Square in central Beijing, 1989.

<sup>18</sup> The name China is derived from Zhongguo.

<sup>19</sup> The 16<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPC in 2002 proposed that "the first two decades of the 21st century is a period of important strategic opportunity for development, which we must seize tightly and which offers bright prospects". The 18<sup>th</sup> Congress in 2012 held that "both the current international and domestic environments shows that China remains in an important period of strategic opportunities for its development, a period in which much can be achieved" (Wang, 2018).

“period of historic opportunities”<sup>20</sup> further commits to stimulating and guiding global affairs. In order to do so, it requires the international architecture to reform, allotting it greater agency over global responsibilities. China’s pursuit for increased power accords to Sun Tzu’s maxim of achieving one’s goal through minimum direct force; moving with the circumstances.

While its posture is relatively new, its charge for international reform, according equitably apportioned authority, thereby diffusing over-concentrated power and reflecting modern realities, has been steadfast. In the forty years since Deng Xiaoping came to power, reform has been China’s second revolution. In his direction giving 2017 WEF speech Xi proposed that international exchange between states and organisations should follow the Chinese practice of continuous reform. China, he said, “has become the world’s second largest economy thanks to 38 years of reform and opening-up” (Xi, 2017). China’s call for international reform is strategic: it achieves influence from directly engaging other states through economic cooperation and mutually beneficial interaction, thereby presenting itself as an improvement upon the Western domination of the terms of trade.

Beyond its bilateral exchanges with other states, China views an authoritative and reformed UN as cardinal in the governance of global relations. China’s message has been consistent: “a just and rational new international and economic order” that “conform to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter”, must give rise to and sustain “the development of the trend toward multipolarity”, contributing “to world peace, stability and prosperity” (Jiang, 1997). In his 2005 statement to the UNGA President Hu Jintao charged the UN to “actively and prudently” promote and “carry out rational and necessary reform to maintain the authority of the United Nations” (Hu, 2005). Xi has maintained this message by stating that: “We should advance multilateral diplomacy,

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<sup>20</sup> In a January 15<sup>th</sup> 2018 article in the People’s Daily Xi transcends the “period of strategic opportunities” to instead refer to a “period of historic opportunities”, affording urgency and moving China into a more active position (Cui, 2018). The former maintained China’s strategic imperative to focus on internal development and growth, while the latter acknowledges the global change and advances active involvement in international relations, illustrated by Xi’s 2017 Declaration: “It is time for us to take centre stage in the world and to make a greater contribution to humankind” (Xi in Clover, 2017).

work to reform the international system and global governance, and increase the representation and say of China and other developing countries” (Xi, 2014). These substantial contributions, involving the ‘what’, motions towards the ‘how’ that President Hu advanced when he said: “We will actively participate in multilateral affairs, support the United Nations, the G20, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS and other multilateral organizations in playing an active role in international affairs, and work to make the international order and system more just and equitable” (Hu, 2012). While the UN holds the central position, there is space for further international organisations to play auxiliary roles in achieving reform.

#### **iv) STRATEGIC INDEPENDENCE AND REFORM: RUSSIA**

While China sees the world in terms of itself, Russia conceives of itself through the broader international reality. China’s perceived position at the centre of the world precedes international exchange. Russian independence is a product of its own toil, a result of its contribution to world history. Its international politics has functioned as balancing or constituting factor to global relations.

Modern Russia perceives itself as central to the creation and therefore to the leadership of the global political architecture. Russia’s greatest and most celebrated achievement remains its *Victory Day*, commemorating its World War Two victory. What it calls the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. Russia sees itself through its relations with others, through the picture the world reflects back at it.

Russia regards itself as truly sovereign when it can exert influence outwards. “Russia perceives itself not as a nation but as a cause, beyond geopolitics, impelled by faith, and held together by arms” (Kissinger, 1994: 143). “Paradox”, extols Kissinger, is “Russia’s most distinguishing feature. Constantly at war and expanding in every direction, it nevertheless considered itself permanently threatened...security had become synonymous with continuous expansion” (Kissinger, 1994: 141).

Russia’s projection of great power is central to its perceived assurance of domestic stability; power and security come from and result in pushing outwards. This strategy of

projecting power tactically prevents antagonists from dislodging its internal stability. Its strategic bottom line is to defend its territorial integrity, its borders, but also its identity and nationhood, from foreign interference; its entire political edifice rests thereupon. This historic centralisation of the state is succinctly put by national poet Alexander Pushkin: “in Russia there is no law. There is a pillar, and on that pillar sits the crown” (Pushkin in Lo, 2015: 3).

The modern state, which followed the demise of the Soviet Union, has, under President Vladimir Putin, utilised the imperial ideology of *Official Nationality* (Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality). Its modern articulation is centred on *sovereign democracy*, bridging historic, autocratic and independent Russia to being a member of the modern family of nations. Herein democracy is not the ends, but the way through which the sovereign proceeds, independently. Sovereign democracy, therefore, needs to set parameters; it has to be the means to deal with the internal and external world.

Antithetical to China, Russia’s domestic security depends on its external strategy, its influence in the region and on the international system. True independence, ensuring self-determination through defence, according to Putin, had become unrealisable in “a world in which there is one master, one sovereign” (Putin, 2007); Russia’s “desire for independence and sovereignty...is an integral part of our national character...either we remain a sovereign nation, or we dissolve without a trace and lose our identity” (Putin in Zevelev, 2016: 9). In order for it to be independent, no dominant, external state could be allowed to singularly command the global strategic environment. To establish that capable states are accorded their equitable power the international architecture should function appropriately and multilaterally.

To ensure itself greater representation in the global strategic domain, Russia promotes international reform. Its tactics seek to disrupt US dominance. In pursuit of a *balance of power* between competing states, it seeks a fair contest through multipolarity, where no singular hegemon maintains absolute power to restrain the interests of capable players. Russia pursues such a terrain by ensuring that the UN undergoes “rational reform...(to) adapt itself to the changing global political and economic realities” (Russian Foreign Policy Concept, 2008). This reconfigured UN alone should guide the relations

between sovereign entities; “the United Nations...should serve as clearing-house for the coordination of international relations and world politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Russian Foreign Policy Concept, 2008).

#### **v) STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION: RHETORIC**

In the international strategic context, described above, sovereign states must execute independence in order to displace hegemony. This is complicated by a multilateral system which integrates states as able (voting) members, but where a hegemon can lead and stem reform. BRICS has emerged as a lobby group; a platform for member states to enjoin their separate agency to pressure towards equity, towards reform.

BRICS states diverge in many regards. Yet, all share the interest of ensuring its national integrity (sovereignty) and the interest of securing regional and international influence through an independent foreign policy. The pursuit of exerting influence in the international political environment is to do so in contradiction to hegemonic Western (Wilsonian<sup>21</sup>) idealism, which determines the universal truth, thereby automatically dispelling any alternative configuration. Through its strategic communication BRICS confronts this order with its version of affairs; subordinating ideas to politics.

Among BRICS each state configures its own truth; the form that advances interests. BRICS provides its member states with an expedient forum to advance and consolidate these differing versions in a space external to Western influence. In China “*seeking truth from facts*” is the ideology, the organizational line, the core values, and the paramount principle that the CPC (Communist Party of China) adheres to in its policy-making activities” (Angang and Jie, 2013). It holds that policy will fail when not based on what is true for China. In order to be independent, to execute its strategy, each state must pursue its own understanding, its own truth; merely complying with external ‘facts’ maintains subservience and thwarts autonomy. According to Mao Zedong ‘seeking truth from facts’ is best understood as ‘facts’ referring “to all things that exist objectively in the world;

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<sup>21</sup> Wilsonianism refers to the ideological (liberal internationalist) positions on foreign policy held by US President Woodrow Wilson and those following him.

'truth' refers to the intrinsic links that exist between objective things" (Angang and Jie, 2013).

The Russian ideologue Aleksandr Dugin advances the exigency of autonomous comprehension by stating that "we in Russia could use postmodernity in order to explain to the West that any truth is relative. We have our special Russian truth, that you need to accept as something that maybe is not your truth...absolute truth, one for all, does not exist" (Dugin, 2016). Putin further explains that all states should pursue their own truths, dissipating global dominance and "bring balance to the international state...protect the diversity of the world" (Putin, in Zevelev, 2016:10).

BRICS is used as a platform to canvass a united message of resistance. It does not present a new 'truth' but purports that each state should be accorded the actionable right to determine on its own, separate 'truth'. These powers, it holds, should inexorably be guided and bound by established norms and values, as established and overseen by the UN.

For these purposes BRICS advances enabling reform; effecting equitable multilateralism, opposing unilateralism. The collaborative expression towards reform is the form that BRICS adopts. Its cooperative diplomacy is the strategic means and ways. Reform, as an end, cannot be accomplished by coercive means and ways. Instead, BRICS performs a tactical platform, formed to present agreeable relations, aimed to pressure and persuade.

BRICS is a deliberate collective. It employs communication to achieve its strategic goals. *Strategic communication* is a discipline that is currently receiving significant attention in the contemporary context. It analyses the "intentional and purposeful communicative relationships between organizations and publics" (Hallahan et al, 2007: 3). The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) defines it as "the coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities - Public Diplomacy, Military Public Affairs, Information Operations and Psychological Operations, as appropriate - in support of Alliance policies, operations and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims" (NATO, 2009: 1). The World Bank provides a definition that is



relevant in regard to international reform. It describes strategic communication as the employment of “tools of persuasion and negotiation - rather than the power of laws, coercion, or incentives - to identify involved parties’ underlying interests and promote their understanding of and support for a proposed reform. The goal of strategic communication is to change behavior, to prompt people to do something in a manner that differs from how they are doing it when the communication effort begins” (Cabanero-Verzosa and Garcia, 2009: 2). Strategic communication can thus be seen as functioning internal to and between given political spheres; it relates to the process of persuading an audience of a specific truth.

Previous definitions serve to contextualise BRICS and its strategic communications. However, instead of adopting and applying external formulations this dissertation explores BRICS’ rhetoric, the communication it strategically employs towards its aims. Rhetoric, says Aristotle, is the art or capacity of observing the available means of persuasion (Aristotle, 2007: 36). A rhetorical examination explores the artistry and forms through which an agent seeks to motivate audiences in particular directions. Such a study is not bound to theoretical or disciplinary prescripts; rhetoric does not have its own subject matter, it explores the given subject: “it does not include technical knowledge of any particular defined genus (of subjects)” (Aristotle, 2007: 38).

This dissertation, through its varied, yet centrally rhetorical analyses, seeks to uncover and assess the communication BRICS tactically employs to attain its goals. These are rhetorical appeals advancing a claim, they are strategic persuasions. The communication released by BRICS both creates the space and induces the form of its collective claims. It is the manifest avenue through which member states opportunistically advance its consolidated version of affairs. While individual states remain dedicated members of the international order, BRICS is constructed as a strategic terrain external to Western hegemony. It performs externally while persuading internally.

Member states artistically use BRICS as a rhetorical body to infiltrate, occupy and motion the international domain accordingly. It is a tool that is used to emphasise matters that states are cautious to make alone or that pursues a broader cause and is more effective when made as a collective. Unlike the claims of individual states, BRICS’

Declarations and Statements entail no obligations. Its rhetorical claims create international realities, motioning towards its strategic ends. Rhetoric is a technology of power; it is instructive and produces meaning. It is not a two-way (dialectical) process producing a separate compound. It is formative and strategic; it sets the ground and occupies the territory. To assess BRICS' strategic communication in this dissertation it is dispassionately appraised. In order to explore BRICS' productions, it is first needed to establish its history, the motives and materiality of its formation.

## **BRICS: HISTORICAL ORIGINS**

### **i) COINING OF THE TERM**

The term BRIC was coined by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill, in a 2001 paper titled *Building Better Global Economic BRICs*. The paper first considers the remarkable economic growth of Brazil, India, China and Russia, discussing BRIC states as investment opportunities for international capital. Bourne (2015) fittingly refers to the creation of Goldman Sachs' BRIC as a project of thought leadership: "a trust production strategy"; an "important strategic communications tool through which firms in global markets can build trust and expertise"; "intellectual firepower assembled and published in communications material designed to transform the way we think" (Bourne, 2015: 322).

Beyond the potential returns associated with engaging BRIC states through investment, the second, more consequential point made by Goldman Sachs, which is also mostly neglected, warns of the insurmountable costs associated were these states not entangled into (Western) corporate power. Goldman Sachs advances the incorporation of BRIC states in order to ensure that these increasingly powerful states do not operate independently to established international infrastructure; their sovereign execution of power posing a palpable threat to the realm of global economic power. The function of BRIC's praise was to strategically ensure Western power and influence is maintained, averting BRIC states' ability to reshape the international system. In order to incorporate BRIC states the Goldman Sachs paper charged the reform of the global economic core: "In line with these prospects, world policymaking fora should be re-organised and in particular, the G7 should be adjusted to incorporate BRIC representatives... it seems quite

clear that the current G7 needs to be ‘upgraded’ and room made for the BRICs in order to allow more effective global policymaking” (O’Neill, 2001: 1-9). This charge indicates that the document which first focused attention on BRIC was instead a strategic recommendation, for global economic power architecture to reform and include the BRIC states. These actions would maintain central control while ensuring both the stability and legitimacy of the prevailing order.

## **ii) TOWARDS A REFORMED G-BLOC?**

An expanded Group or ‘G’ model was explored under the Outreach Five (O5)<sup>22</sup> dialogue, from 2005. The participation of the O5 at the G8<sup>23</sup> meetings was formulated under the *Heiligendamm Process*, two years later. The reform of the G8, becoming the Group of Thirteen (G13), was advanced by French President Sarkozy, who said that the appropriate proceedings “should be institutionalized...I hope that bit by bit, the G8 becomes the G13” (Cooper and Antkiewicz, 2008). In a joint Statement indicating agreeable relations and conditions for closer cooperation, the G8 and O5 declared that their interactions marked “an important step towards an equal and enduring partnership for building the framework conditions of a globalized and competitive world economy. In a globalizing world, we have to look beyond national and regional boundaries and work together” (G8, 2007a). Though it did not offer definitive illustration, their positive engagement under the Heiligendamm Process did suggest an affirmative answer to Goldman Sachs’ question: “would the BRICs want to be in” an expanded G-bloc? (O’Neill, 2001: 10).

The G8’s consensus was however not to expand towards a G13, but to continue including the O5 countries, among others, in an ongoing discussion. Instead of a singular, equitable G-bloc, the G20 was empowered beyond its earlier mandate as an economic and financial discussion group to occupy (mostly display) broader authority. It too commenced a yearly leader summit. This tiered system of both G8 and G20 emerged in 2008. This expansion, beyond the O5, inculcated a broader, attenuated collective; strategically minimising the influence of the O5 among the inclusion of others. This decision partially

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<sup>22</sup> The O5 consisted of Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa.

<sup>23</sup> Between 1997 and 2014 Russia formed part of an extended G7+1 or G8.

conforms to Goldman Sachs' notion that incorporation would not be simple and that "existing G20 meetings are arguably an extended club version of this proposal" (O'Neill, 2011: 10). The continued existence of the G8, following the G20's reflexive declaration that it forms the "premier forum for our international economic cooperation", created tension and proved the global elite's opposition to equitable reform (G20, 2009). This bifurcation shifted global power from a singular core and opened to broader articulations of power.

In June 2009, a month before the G8 produced its *Concluding Report of the Heiligendamm Process*, effectively rejecting a singular expanded G-bloc, a first BRIC leaders' summit took place in Russia. The timing of these events suggests that BRIC's<sup>24</sup> formation is a reaction to not being included into the powerful, decision-making core. BRICS' similar form and function to that of the G7<sup>25</sup>, further proposes that it was formed as a counter-body, occupying an adjacent position to that of the G7. Both form and reasoning can be seen through previous historical endeavours occupying similar positions, discussed below.

The multilateral exchange between BRICS states did not commence at the G8's invitation. BRICS members all form part of the original G20, as well as other major international organisations. Member states have also coordinated at various extra-Western platforms. Russian, Indian and Chinese foreign ministers have been meeting regularly to discuss regional and global issues, in the RIC format. The three states have also been developing closer relations through the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

South Africa's accession has afforded the group a broader outlook and significance. Its inclusion merged existing bodies into BRICS. The IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) Dialogue Forum which promotes closer South-South cooperation and understanding was launched in 2003, while the BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) Group has acted

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<sup>24</sup> BRIC was officially expanded to BRICS in 2010. South Africa's inclusion ensured global representation and increased political gravitas.

<sup>25</sup> Discussed on page 96.

together in climate change negotiations. A year before the 2007 Heiligendamm Process commenced the first BRIC meeting took place on the margins of the UNGA.

The exclusion of Western influence has been core to its meetings and performances. BRICS is a formation that springs from, operates in and aspires to the global strategic environment. This space of meta-power is greatly complex and concealed. BRICS lends member states a shared platform to express and claim their independence. Their interactions have been centred on shared interests, cooperation and reciprocal gain of influence. Their exercise of influence outside the realm of established international infrastructure, or at the margins of international events, has produced external configurations of power that have challenged the international power formation.

### **iii) NEW FORM, OLD GOALS**

BRICS presents a new configuration of global power; advancing international reform. To these ends its first summit Declaration in 2009 stated that “emerging and developing economies must have greater voice and representation in international financial institutions” (BRICS, 2009). These goals are not new. While the group situates itself under the authority of the UN, it also emerges to advance the goals of previous, similar platforms, such as the Group of Seventy Seven (G77) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)<sup>26</sup>. NAM is an associative group of states which collaboratively advances state sovereignty and effective multilateralism. It was set up in 1961 to advance the interests of independent states and counter the centripetal forces which pulled states into the erstwhile bi-polar world order. Though the end of the Cold War practically made NAM defunct it continues to pursue influence through internal developmental policies; seeking hands-on empowerment through the UN, an essentially diplomatic and therefore hands-off organisation. Its expression through advancing UN resolutions, such as establishing the

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<sup>26</sup> Neither has a secretariat nor a constitution. Both exist non-hierarchically among equal members, chaired on a rotational basis, where states remain the units of relation and power is pooled at the centre. Recognition of states obviates operational administration and allows for guidance through principles, not institutions.

New International Economic Order (NIEO)<sup>27</sup> and New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO)<sup>28</sup> sought to oblige the UN to activate its infrastructure, setting up and executing what these weaker states did not have the capacity to do. Its actions avoided direct confrontation with the power blocs. As such NAM wished to 'de-bloc' the world by emphasising the UN as a singular arbiter of power.

NAM's establishment gave form to the *Declaration on the Promotion of World Peace and Cooperation*, adopted in the Final Communiqué of the 1955 Asian-African (Bandung) Conference. Many of the participating states were newly independent. The Conference addressed political, cultural and economic co-operation as methods to oppose indirect colonialism, promoting actual independence (Bandung Conference, 1955). The Declaration, was directed as response to the "present state of international tension", advising that "all States should co-operate, especially through the United Nations"; "all nations should have the right freely to choose their own political and economic systems and their own way of life, in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations" (Bandung Conference, 1955). The Declaration significantly concludes by listing ten enabling principles, advancing independent and multilateral cooperation. These principles are taken from the UN Treaty 4307 between China and India, as well as certain core values of the UN Charter<sup>29</sup>.

The 1954 Treaty 4307 is based on a set of principles known in China as *Peaceful Coexistence* and in India as *Pancheel*. They are:

"(1) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty,

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<sup>27</sup> The Declaration for the Establishment of a New World Economic Order was adopted in 1974 through UN Resolution 6/3201 to promote the interests of developing countries, ensuring increased developmental assistance and ameliorating terms of trade.

<sup>28</sup> The New World Information and Communication Order is a concept that emerged under the *Many Voices One World* report in 1980 which was tasked by the UN to recommend ways to improve global media representation.

<sup>29</sup> UN principles are featured in the Declarations as: "Respect for fundamental human rights and for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations"; "Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself singly or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations"; and "Settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means, such as negotiation, conciliation, arbitration or judicial settlement as well as other peaceful means of the parties' own choice, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations" (Bandung Conference, 1955: 9).

- (2) mutual non-aggression,
- (3) mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs,
- (4) equality and mutual benefit, and
- (5) peaceful co-existence” (United Nations, 1954).

Both China and India claim the authoring of the principles; they remain the core of their policy towards each other. While the content of the Treaty relates to the promotion of trade and cultural intercourse, specifically between the Tibetan regions held by China and India, the *Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence* has formed the normative backbone governing Chinese foreign policy, first with fellow Socialist countries, following the 1956 Polish and Hungarian crises and later with all states. The Chinese argue for an indirect approach, suggesting that the “Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence are diametrically opposed to power politics which have been in dominance in international relations over the last few centuries” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 2014).

To India Panchheel is inscribed in cultural tradition. To former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru the principles would produce peace in a specific area, whereupon its enabling successes would be extended to the rest of the world. To him these principles would allow mutually beneficial cooperation among truly independent states (Nehru, 1963). Nehru would uphold the principles of Panchheel as the central component for post-colonial states to develop themselves independently from, but also in cooperation with, all other states. Nehru was a central founder of the NAM. He wove the concepts together with the UN Charter principles to establish their legitimacy. In upholding these principles members claim their autonomy; “if I join any of these big groups I lose my identity” (Nehru, 1955).

Significantly, under Nikita Khrushchev the Soviet Union’s pursued its own version of *Peaceful Coexistence*<sup>30</sup>. Following Joseph Stalin’s death, Khrushchev sought a thaw in

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<sup>30</sup> The split between China and the Soviet Union in the late 1950’s was greatly due to China’s loss of faith in the Soviet’s ideological leadership. Mao felt that Peaceful Coexistence was only to be had between Socialist

relations with the US, de-escalating international tensions and advancing a singular, open strategic environment wherein the Soviets could pursue influence over allied, Western and independent states. In a letter to *Foreign Affairs Magazine* Khrushchev set out to persuade the West to work together with the Soviet Union, prompting the US to cease its containment policies and to commit to “non-aggression” and the “renunciation of interference in the internal affairs of other countries” (Khrushchev, 1959: 3). “Peaceful coexistence”, he said, “can and should develop into peaceful competition” (Khrushchev, 1959: 4). Khrushchev’s pursuit of open relations between Capitalist and Socialist states sought recognition and persuasion; benefiting from open engagement with Capitalist proxy parties, while maintaining control over Socialist proxy and client states. Admitting reciprocal independence would avoid the “situation by interferences from without, by means of war”; “there is only one way to peace, one way out of the existing tension: peaceful coexistence” (Khrushchev, 1959: 18). To the Soviet Union peaceful coexistence would be used to shore up power in its bloc, not advance the true independence of states.

NAM’s principles entailed actual multilateral independence, taking away privileges of association from superpowers. The end of the Cold War practically changed the geopolitical and strategic environment. When Soviet belligerence ended, giving way to Western unipolarity, competing blocs, presenting competing *truths*, gave way to a singular Western universalism. Instead, of coercive hegemony, power has since been performed through funded and managed international organisations, such as the World Bank or International Monetary Fund (IMF). These organisations have been structured and capacitated to obviate the (direct) interference of superpowers in the inner workings of sovereign states. Instead, all states are incorporated into a singular universal system, presented as multilateral, but actually steered by the West. Herein international organisations have resisted real reform towards greater equity, corresponding to the growth of emerging and re-emerging states. This tension remains unresolved. The US steers international institutions, while the UN maintains its status as definitive arbiter of relations among states. Its autonomous authority and legitimacy afford all states nominal independence.

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states, while Khrushchev sought to use it to find rapprochement and strategic vantage over the United States and its allies.



While NAM failed to structurally activate the agency of the UN, it did substantially contribute by successfully lobbying for the uptake of independent states as members of the UNGA, thereby achieving greater parity and near universal membership; affording further legitimacy. NAM's goals of UN reform correspond to those of BRICS, while its ways and means differ. NAM petitioned the UN to develop weaker states through proposals such as the NIEO. For BRICS the independent state, not international organisations, is the central agent of executive power. Its members turn to the UN to activate its Charter, to ensure these powers; BRICS is used as a lobby group to enforce the observance of UN principles and norms.

#### **iv) INCARNATING THE MULTILATERAL ORDER**

The UN is empowered, not to act, but to guide through the foundational principles and norms of its Charter. It is the central domain where states interact. The UN Charter is the foundational treaty and guiding meridian that maintains relations between states. It is the multilateral system that preserves peaceful order and promotes social and economic progress. BRICS has no foundational treaty of its own<sup>31</sup>; it strategically subsumes itself under the UN Charter, actively advancing its expedient implementation. Its commitment to the Charter ensures that BRICS is not duplicitous. Each country aligns its (diverging) domestic architectures to that of the universal body, thereby designing a non-confrontational lobby group. Through the norms and objectives of the UN Charter BRICS' member states, of varying civilisational and political manifestations, are tactically, as well as strategically, united.

Coherence under UN authority legitimates BRICS' members while delegitimizing US unilateral territorialisation of the global order<sup>32</sup>. BRICS' rhetorical, as well as effective, embodiment of the norms and principles of the UN order actively presents multilateralism; the appropriate interpretation of the UN Charter. The UN, capacitated by

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<sup>31</sup> It, therefore, complies with UN Charter Article 103, which states that: "In the event of a conflict between the obligations of the Members of the United Nations under the present Charter and their obligations under any other international agreement, their obligations under the present Charter shall prevail" (United Nations, 1945).

<sup>32</sup> Discussed on page 25.

its member states, is purposed to be the hub (Article 1.4) which collectively maintains peace and security, preventing threats and suppressing aggressors (Article 1.1); to cooperate respectfully (Article 1.2); and jointly address international concerns (Article 1.3) (United Nations, 1945). Though the UN does not design the execution of tasks, it does stipulate the manner or form international exchanges must take. Article 2 of the Charter lays out the *Principles* by which the UN and its members must pursue the *Purposes* stated in Article 1.

BRICS' interactions incarnate the normative UN order. The affiliation between member states demonstrates the legal order; such an order does not follow statements of fact, but the embodiments of valid norms (Kelsen, 1967). Its structure is founded in the sovereign independence and equality of all members (Article 2.1); its engagement takes place openly, in good faith (Article 2.2); members deliberately share and cooperate, thereby opposing threat and force (Article 2.4) (United Nations, 1945). BRICS' form presents an exemplary exhibition of UN principles, positively establishing the international, legal order. It is an embodiment of the legitimate global order. It rhetorically displays the territory upon which it executes its interests; the territory which affords member states their prerogative, equitably increasing and diminishing the privileges of others.

BRICS' posture is, therefore, to claim the space normatively provided by the UN for states to execute their independence, allowing for multiple truths. Its articulation of the UN order confronts the dictated conception of US. It claims the international order for what it is, not unilateral but multilateral. BRICS' emphasis on the UN points to US liberal democracy as being a singular version inside a diverse international system; the US is but one in the broader constellation of agents. BRICS articulates the principles of the legitimate order, such as independence, non-interference and engagement. By returning the state to the central agent of power, in relation to the UN, not the US, it challenges the US' unilateral hegemony over the strategic environment. It claims independence for states in general; an indirect claim by member states. BRICS' challenge to hegemony is not direct. Instead, its strategic communications return focus to the foundations of the international order, to point to the hegemonic truth as simply being one version of affairs.

## CONCLUSION

BRICS' formation into a strategic rhetorical body is to pursue the shared interests of its member states. Together it sets out to influence and reform the international domain towards equitable multilateralism, greater power for member states and diminished power for dominant states. In 2003 Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General, appealed for reform, in the face of pervasive unilateralism. He warned that "we have come to a fork in the road...a moment no less decisive than 1945...we must not shy away from questions about the adequacy, and effectiveness, of the rules and instruments at our disposal...it is not enough to denounce unilateralism...We must show that those concerns can, and will, be addressed effectively through collective action" (Annan, 2003).

The UN's charge for effective multilateralism is the strategic opportunity upon which BRICS has built itself. Though the UN centrally endorses it, reform must be steered and carried out by its member states. BRICS' formation and its rhetorical performances present the willingness and intent of its member states to lead and accomplish the implementation of such reform. It evokes Annan's urgency, his 'fork in the road', proposing to influence the global multilateral course. By illustrating and exhibiting legitimate norms and principles, BRICS' strategic communications present the rhetorical occupation and the control of the strategic environment. In order to appreciate its determination and direction, BRICS' strategic communications must be analytically explored.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ANALYSIS OF BRICS' PROGRAMMATIC DOCUMENTATION

"The real issue arising from the shift in the global balance of power concerns the relationship between power and international order. What do the BRICS want from the international economic order?"

Braz Baracuhy (Baracuhy, 2012: 1)

"That ultimate *disease* of cooperation: *war*"

Kenneth Burke (Burke, 1969: 22)

### INTRODUCTION

BRICS employs a hybrid approach to achieving its persuasion strategies. While it maintains an active position in international leadership fora, it increasingly pursues influence in the international order by embodying legitimate values and norms through its own designs; through its programmes it elucidates an alternative narrative. This chapter examines inter-BRICS agreements; foundational formations. It pursues direct observation from various documents, proposing an understanding of how these scenarios establish influence and conviction, claiming common ground. The chapter assesses BRICS' strategic formation and analyses its strategic rationale. It takes cumulatively from its various agreements to discern the broader whole. The establishment of its programmes shapes and redefines international leadership external to but also in relation with established international institutions. The programmatic operations of BRICS canvas the positive intra-state relations that it advances. Through exercising its scenarios via the practices, as well as principles and norms<sup>33</sup> of international law, it exhibits leadership in the international order, placing itself at its core.

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<sup>33</sup> According to Krasner (1983): "Principles are beliefs of fact, causation, and rectitude. Norms are standards of behavior defined in terms of rights and obligations" (Krasner, 1983: 2).

## BRICS PROGRAMMES: ESTABLISHING LEGITIMACY

BRICS programmatic documentation, treaties, agreements and Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs), deliberately establish a modality of international relations that is multilateral. BRICS embodies and articulates the international order via its collaborative narrative and scenario. This application is what Schweller and Pu (2011) call *shaping strategies*. Central to BRICS is the political performance of moulding its programmes around legitimate means. BRICS' style is to underpin its agreements with established principles and norms. It presents itself, its narrative and scenario, as legitimate, thereby reflecting on the diverging political realities of others as being accordingly illegitimate. Central to its strategy is, therefore, to dissuade against the existing influence of others. It tactically expresses that which it founds itself on. The dedicated performance of a just, legitimate order, not the outcome of its actions, is what it critically aims to convey.

An exhibition of this performance is presented in *The Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership*:

“The BRICS Strategy is based on the following principles: full respect for the sovereignty of the Member States; commitment to international law and recognition of the central role of the United Nations on peace, security and development; account for national interests, priorities, growth and development strategies of the Member States; openness, sharing of information and consensus in decision-making; commitment to the rules and principles of the multilateral trading system as embodied in the World Trade Organization (WTO); recognition of the multipolar nature of the global economic and financial system; support for greater exchanges of best practices in enhancing business environment; transparency and predictability in the investment environment in line with national policies and priorities; commitment to supporting sustainable development, strong, balanced and inclusive growth, financial stability, and balanced combination of measures ensuring social and economic development and protection of the environment; commitment to mutually beneficial cooperation with

other countries; inadmissibility of unilateral economic sanctions in violation of universally recognized norms of international relations” (BRICS, 2015b: 5).

By stating selected core principles BRICS makes these principles its own. Its selectivity establishes a distinct narrative. This example shows how programmatic documents organise meaning and order. They construct knowledge about self and the world at large; creating realities and understandings through composed processes. They are logical claims that delineate and present BRICS’ scenario. It is within these foundational documents that BRICS’ broader narrative and thesis are advanced. These documents are more about the demonstration of principles and norms than institutionalising substantial programmes among states; appealing through display.

The principles advanced here form the imprint of how international relations should be guided. These documents are therefore firmly rooted in the ethos it wishes to present. In their interactions with each other, BRICS states develop a best practice modality of interaction, setting out meaning and order, as well as clarity of undertaking. Programmes are paths towards an end. It follows naturally to examine how BRICS expresses itself, how it constructs itself and how it relates to existing global institutions. This broader analysis informs to further conceptualise the strategies of persuasion embedded in and outside the established order.

## **INVIGORATING REFORM**

BRICS explicitly operates inside of established international law and order. Its rhetoric programmatically employs legal principles and norms in order to delineate its own narrative, advancing its persuasive ends. “Law is value dependent”, says Scobbie (2014), “values cannot be captured in a formal logical system. The application of law lies not in defining each word” (Scobbie, 2014). BRICS’ rhetoric interprets and expediently substantiates international law.

World order, explains Falk (1999) regards the “distribution of power and authority among the political actors at the global stage” (Falk, 1999: 29). This is the space to locate and understand BRICS. Member states together perform BRICS in the UN realm, to ensure

its stratagem of exhibiting independence, as well as achieving recognition and reform. BRICS' engagement with international law is to prompt and motion against unipolarity and unilateralism, towards multipolarity and multilateralism. International law and latent multi-institutionalism<sup>34</sup> are used as strategic devices to break free from the grip of dominant schemes and to gain common ground. It does not antagonise or contravene any legal or political reality. Instead by practising cooperative relations it develops its narrative advancing equitable agency of individual states. BRICS embodies the multilateral order and propels the reform of the UN and international organisations through its persuasive and dissuasive techniques. By and large, in order to maintain its indirect form, it does not introduce specific measures to be met. Instead, it motions towards the implementation of measures that have been agreed upon but remain unchanged. Relevant reforms remain unfulfilled 44 years after the UN submitted that "irreversible changes in the relationship of forces in the world necessitate the active, full and equal participation of the developing countries" (United Nations, 1974).

BRICS exhibits the terrain it wishes to be recognised to occupy, while strategically avoiding any direct affront. It seeks a "state of international order (which) is determined at root by the interactions between great powers and their capacity to cooperate effectively on key issues of the day" (Jones et al, 2014: 2).

BRICS is not a revolutionary bloc. It is a platform towards global governance reform, maintaining and invigorating the existing stable order wherein states are the legitimate units of power. It is from the existing international legal system that BRICS is founded and from where it develops its ethos and logos. The collectivist and multilateral functioning of the UN positively informs BRICS. Its interactions present amicable and balanced inter-state exchange among leading countries.

BRICS aspires towards power transition, managed through institutional, diplomatic negotiations. Such modulations, says Baracuhy, "are rare and yet sure events in

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<sup>34</sup> Latent multi-institutionalism refers to a strategy where states participate in multiple international fora in order to expand its influence and gain common ground. These "flexible coalitions, all of them characterized by low degrees of institutionalization (G3, G5, O5 etc.). This network strategy guarantees a maximum of national sovereignty, flexibility and independence" (Flemes, 2012: 5).

international relations...institutionalized power transition would be a novelty in international relations” (Baracuhy, 2012: 1-3). BRICS’ persuasive strategy is to ensure that this passage is peaceful. BRICS accordingly avoids direct power politics, preferring instead to move in a slow, calculated manner, internal to the international order. It employs its ethos as the means towards its goal. It is careful of outright balancing and revisionism, which would endanger reality *as is* and the recently improved global positioning of BRICS member states. Instead, it finds and proposes alternative delegitimizing ways. It delegitimizes exceptional treatment and behaviour by dominant states through a discourse of resistance. This discourse is weakened by its own shortcomings, such as its lack of critique for Russia’s exceptionalist handling of the Crimean crisis<sup>35</sup> (Stuenkel, 2015).

BRICS embodies the reform it seeks. Its grouped exhibition of mutually beneficial, yet strictly independent, collectivism exhibits its denouncement of unipolarity. Using Hobsbawm’s (1973) observation, the less powerful members instead labour “the system to its advantage - or rather to its minimum disadvantage” (Hobsbawm, 1973: 13). BRICS does not have a revisionist agenda. Instead, it proposes as Ikenberry (2008) does, that global power transition does not have to destroy the established order; revolution would be irrational, as such a sophisticated system will be immensely difficult and expensive to reconstruct. Competitors, says Ikenberry referring to China, can gain full access in a “system that is open, integrated, and rule-based, with wide and deep political foundations” (Ikenberry, 2008: 24). BRICS states have done exactly this, benefiting greatly from the system that was largely built by the West. The tactics of US president Trump’s *America First* economic nationalism presents a movement from utilising multilateral institutions to engaging unilateralism directly. Increased antagonism<sup>36</sup> has undermined and weakened multilateral organisations, making it more difficult for other states to draw benefit in the international system. The imposition of unilateralism is an about turn for US tactics and suggests increased competition for its leadership and control over the

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<sup>35</sup> In 2014 the Crimean peninsula seceded from Ukraine to rejoin Russia. The secession, widely regarded as an annexation, was accompanied by an increased Russian military presence.

<sup>36</sup> The Trump administration has threatened multilateral organisations such as the International Criminal Court, it has withdrawn from the international climate accord (The Paris Agreement) and its unilateral imposition of tariffs has been in direct contravention of World Trade Organisation rules.



international strategic environment. It is a clear realist response to the accomplishments of its challengers. This is illustrated by his comment that China has “taken advantage of us like nobody in history” (Trump, 2017). While the US is turning inward, capitalising on its universal power through unilateral tactics, BRICS are advancing ever greater cooperation, through open, networked exchange.

BRICS’ strategic functioning inside the international legal and normative domain is furthermore due to it not having the requisite institutions, means or will to forge new norms. Regardless of its potential, even combined BRICS states remain too poor and too weak to balance US interests<sup>37</sup>. BRICS combined yearly military spending is less than half that of the US; the US security establishment and especially its dominant navy is supreme, constraining any belligerent attempt (Tian et al, 2017).

Instead, BRICS practises delegitimation through its rhetoric. Its discord with the functioning of international relations draws attention; “relations of resistance always coexist with relations of domination” (Schweller and Pu, 2011: 47). The establishment of its programmes installs alternative measures, repudiating hegemony. Programmes do not balance. Instead, they institutionalise BRICS interactions, creating the mechanisms to soft balance. Presenting a statement of rejection, programmes logically explain what is and what should be.

BRICS benefits from the looseness of international law, as a “collection of rules and norms that states and other actors feel an obligation to obey in their mutual relations and commonly do obey” (Henderson, 2010: 5). From a political perspective, international law is applicable only where there is the political agreement for its observation and operation. This manifests a law among agents, thereby forming common power, as supported by Thomas Hobbes’ adage on law and justice: “where there is no common power, there is no law. If there is no law, there is no injustice” (Hobbes, 2016). BRICS collectively evoke common (alternative) power through its political agreements. Its deliberate legal proclamations function to point out perceived injustice.

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<sup>37</sup> The per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in BRICS states is significantly lower than that of developed countries, making their governments unwilling and unable to assume international responsibilities (Stuenkel, 2015: 157).

Its interactions on the state level practically set the boundaries, facilitating the performance of its relations. Its *modus operandi* is to substantiate the letter of international law; its activities are less important than its performance of ideal-type relations and values. This manifestation negates the assertion made by Western commentators that “rising powers do not want to play by the west’s rules” (Stephens, 2010) and that emerging powers do not accord to US Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick’s precept of “responsible stakeholders”<sup>38</sup>.

It is at BRICS’ rhetorical core to propound member states to be legitimate sovereigns in the global domain. In its presentation of legal accord BRICS demonstrates the application of the law, objecting to the deployment of sovereign power to international organisations. It critiques liberal internationalism for depriving sovereign states of their agency. According to Stuenkel, BRICS advances that “states need to be represented not only in international rules, but also in the way they are applied. It is thus scepticism about the operationalization of liberal norms, rather than the goals and values that guide them that shapes the BRICS’ relationship to today’s global order” (Stuenkel, 2015: 166). BRICS endorses the form of similar structures, where states do not delegate authority but remain at the organisation’s core. Kirton and Larionova (eds., 2018) poignantly explain this relationship between states and intergovernmental organisations (IGO) as states being the principals and organisations the agents; “states retain their sovereign control over their institution’s design and agenda” (Kirton and Larionova, eds., 2018: 4).

BRICS’ programmes advance legal intergovernmentalism, where cooperation, not dominance is central. This system holds that the agency of institutions such as the IMF should be limited. From a state-centred position these bodies are seen to act with impunity, demanding accord for its proverbial carrot; thereby interfering with national sovereignty.

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<sup>38</sup> During his remarks to the National Committee on US-China relations, the US Deputy Secretary of State, Robert Zoellick, prompted that “it is time to take our policy beyond opening doors to China’s membership into the international system: We need to urge China to become a *responsible stakeholder* in that system” (Zoellick, 2005).

BRICS prescribes a Weberian legal-rational approach<sup>39</sup> to legitimacy. Governments execute upon those systems that maintain order (peace and security); government maintains its power when pursuing public interest, receiving trust in recognition. This approach to legitimacy engages both international law and international institutions. Relating international law Wolfram discusses the Schmittian position of state centrality to that where power is pushed to the periphery. The former, relating to the thoughts of German jurist Carl Schmitt, discusses power centrally executed by the sovereign, the latter sees government power supplemented or even replaced by institutions and organisations, affording it broader capacity (Wolfram, n.d). Though BRICS advances an outright state-centric approach, its hybrid strategy<sup>40</sup> allows for expedient amalgamations. It uses its state-centrism to achieve agency in institutions, adopting a consolidation of the two, where valid. Yet, this is not done external to the state; it does not capacitate international organisations with exclusive power. Instead, it proposes multilateral exchange among equal states to be based upon a singular qualifier: sovereignty; allowing for the construction of power, domestically. This opposes the core/periphery model of Immanuel Wallerstein's (1974) *world-systems analysis*, where there are well-defined differences among states. Such a world order functions from a capitalist core and its relations with fundamentally dissimilar semi-peripheral and peripheral areas (Wallerstein, 1974).

## **BUILDING BRICS NARRATIVES AND SCENARIOS**

Programmatic documentation assembles BRICS' official thesis through building scenarios. It establishes a crafted message of what BRICS pursues in the international order. These documents present an account which is transformative, due to it being complete; it is a case in itself. It does not rely on external substantiation. Roman consul Cicero defines such an account as a narration, where the "cause itself and the whole principle of the dispute is contained" (Cicero, 1853: 1.19). BRICS' narration explains its case; this is the 'truth' it advances. It uses narratives as strategic paths, carrying influence, through specific, framed perceptions. Framing refers to the process of "selecting and highlighting some facets of

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<sup>39</sup> The legal-rational approach conforms to principles; "authority is empowered by a formalistic belief in the content of the law (legal) or natural law (rationality)" (Williams, 2003).

<sup>40</sup> Discussed on page 59.

events or issues and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, and/or solution” (Entman, 2004: 5).

Miskimmon, O’Loughlin and Roselle produce a compelling conceptualisation of narratives in strategic contexts. The authors suggest that: “Narratives are frameworks that allow humans to connect apparently unconnected phenomena around some causal transformation. The endpoint of this transformation bestows meaning upon all parts of the whole” (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin and Roselle, 2013: 5). As a compound of diverging states, BRICS uses narratives to compose meaning, to pronounce upon itself as well as the international order. Its narratives are designed or nurtured with the intention of structuring the responses of others to developing events, to persuade others to favourably shape “their interests, their identity, and their understanding of how international relations works and where it is heading” (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin and Roselle, 2013: 3).

Programmatic documents are strategic shaping tools. Each is individually delineated, each setting out a route, each playing a substantiating role. In this systematic manner, through postulating a sequence of events, BRICS’ scenarios establish and encode meaning. Together these set agreements serve a broader strategy; they form the building blocks for greater design. Programmes do not curate managed responses. Instead, as deliberative arguments, they structure and lead a sequence of events to which the agents and the audience have to respond to. BRICS’ scenarios invent meaning in global governance and thereby affect its inchoate form. Countenancing the predominant rendering, BRICS performs independence, executing a strictly indirect blow to hegemony.

In constructing its argument, outside the ambit of established institutions, BRICS produces its own strategic reality. As an organisation of states, it shapes the reformed world by exhibiting it. These scenarios urge acceptance for a course of action. It seeks recognition in the international domain. It is not through analysis, but by manifestation that its truth is assembled. The construction of a scenario takes place through the exhibition of fable, history and argument, Cicero’s subtypes of narration.

The fable presents statements that are clearly false, but are presented in order to galvanise the audience. Whereas this often is the case elsewhere, the precise, legalistic

formulation of political agreements avoids this subtype. History is based on provable precedents, “an account of exploits which have been performed” (Cicero, 1853: 1.19). History is built upon traceable record. BRICS’ political commitments are founded upon the consensus to formally actualise its relations from previous meetings; Statements, Declarations and Action Plans form the back-story and formalise its wishes. Lastly, the argument is a presentation of what should happen<sup>41</sup>. BRICS’ argument through these documents is to produce its willed, reconstituted global governance order, external to hegemony. In order to successfully accrue influence, the narration produces the substance to serve the argument. Evidence is created, or discovered (as per Cicero’s *inventio*<sup>42</sup>), to serve this argument; establishing an auspicious message. Herein an appreciation for *kairos*<sup>43</sup> is essential, as programmes always have a relation to time.

BRICS rhetorically constructs its interpretation of affairs in the light of there being “no single organizing principle on which global governance rests” (Roseanu in Rewizorski, 2015: 26). Instead, the author argues that “global governance is the sum of myriad – literally millions – of control mechanisms driven by different histories, goals, structures and processes” (Ibid). It is therefore that BRICS produces a hybrid modality, of state-centred, latent multi-institutionalism.

BRICS’ claims discover what is just and unjust. Its narrative competes for the common ground that is bound by international law. It strategically reinvigorates established norms to propose a preferable version of affairs. These arguments generally remain without external or independent action, staying within the framework of established legal order. This strategy hinges on utility, providing alternative ways to encounter the international reality. It argues that although established international organisations are multinational, they have maintained certain orthodoxies and have been

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<sup>41</sup> This is usually captured in the *Terms of Reference* of a programme. For example: “Convinced that the establishment of such a Bank would reflect the close relations among the BRICS countries, while providing a powerful instrument for increasing their economic cooperation” (BRICS, 2014a). Or: “Deepening BRICS Media Cooperation, Promoting Fair and Just International Public Opinion” (BRICS, 2017c).

<sup>42</sup> *Inventio* refers to the discovery or search for the means of an argument. It forms part of Aristotle’s five canons of rhetoric.

<sup>43</sup> *Kairos* is detailed and applied in chapter five.

dominated by the West. This reliance on Western institutional knowledge has obstructed the utility of, for example, African policy-makers to produce their own systems (Sidiropoulus, 2017). By exhibiting a combined, institutional voice BRICS interrupts the Western orientation of international policy guidance. The results of its programmes are less important than the substantial challenge they pose. Its actuality presents an independent exploitation of the principles of international law, executing a fundamentally new reality.

The establishment of a BRICS narrative has matured over the last years. It, however, remains a novel exercise, poorly constituted and plagued by inconsistencies and tensions. Members of the group often have very different individual political and economic narratives. Examples of which are: the 2017 Doklam border dispute between China and India<sup>44</sup>; trade disputes at the World Trade Organization (WTO)<sup>45</sup>; and different positions on central matters of international relations, such as the reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The latter provides an indication of BRICS' strategic hedging. BRICS' summit Declarations (2011-2017) all call for reform of the UNSC, adding that "China and Russia reiterate the importance they attach to the status of India, Brazil and South Africa in international affairs, and understand and support their aspiration to play a greater role in the UN" (BRICS, 2011c; BRICS, 2012b; BRICS, 2013c; BRICS, 2014c; BRICS 2015a; BRICS, 2016c; BRICS, 2017c). This consolidated impression is contradicted in practice; Russia and China are in fact the only UNSC permanent members not to have supported the bid of either Brazil or India to be included into an expanded permanent Council. These inconsistencies show a discourse of cooperation as means to showcase the failures of the existing system, while BRICS states are often complicit of similar actions or non-actions; confirming that it too is a tool used by members.

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<sup>44</sup> In June 2017 first Chinese and then Indian border patrols and construction troops entered the area of Doklam, an area claimed by both China and India's ally Bhutan. All groups later withdrew (Panda, 2017).

<sup>45</sup> "About 70% of China's WTO disputes are with emerging powers. Brazil and other BRICS countries have introduced duties on Chinese products, and by the end of 2012, India had no fewer than 149 antidumping cases against Chinese products. Brazil has lodged a complaint at the WTO against South Africa" (Latino, in Sciso, 2017: 52).

BRICS is purposed to designate faults and incoherency within the international order. Its constituting programmatic documents do not greatly institutionalise but instead aggregate a scenario, presenting a representation of its unified performance. The instrumentalisation of its own scenarios, through the establishment of its exchange platforms, the Think Tank Council, Academic Forum, Network University among others, present guidance and policy recommendations towards the re-imagination of intergovernmental solidarity and interaction. These meetings, for their consistency and commitment rather than practical output, shape the indirect challenge of BRICS leadership. It is here that the question of international strategy is deliberatively challenged by the production of BRICS scenarios and a BRICS narrative.

## **HYBRID STRATEGY: BOTH IN SUPPORT OF AND IN RESISTANCE TO INSTITUTIONS**

BRICS presents a hybrid strategic modality, ways and means that pursue influence both inside and outside of established institutions. As an example, BRICS states' membership in the G20 affords greater transactional power to steer the direction of future international exchange. Its G20 involvement is however also limiting; sustained involvement in the status quo impedes upon its own reformist claims and goals. The G20 remains essentially an outflow of and thereby contained by the G7 and Bretton Woods institutions, as confirmed by the G7 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Statement in 1999. Here it was agreed to effectively expand the dominion of the G7 by bringing more states under its leadership via the establishment of "a new mechanism for informal dialogue in the framework of the Bretton Woods institutional system, to broaden the dialogue...We believe that discussions held in this group will prove useful to complement and reinforce the role of the governing bodies of the Bretton Woods institutions" (G7, 1999).

BRICS members maintain active participation in and afford authority to established institutions. This is done in order to secure common ground. BRICS' ethos and logos appeals are structured from inside these institutions, occurring not as a group, but by individual countries claiming greater influence. Their claims, as deserving members of an expanded global core, is the narrative that the group is founded upon; supported by

figures such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) projection that by 2030 China's gross domestic product will exceed that of the US, while India's will be slightly below that of Europe (Stuenkel, 2015: 165). The corroboration of these facts builds the historic as well as prescribed aspect of its scenario. This logical claim is that rich, Western, former colonial states occupy a disproportionate share of power. Reform is required to assure logical and ethical international equivalency; a means toward achieving the spirit of the UN Charter<sup>46</sup>.

Together BRICS does not set out this claim textually. It is driven by individual states, as sovereign power regards not the grouped entity, but the separate countries. Through its participation in platforms such as the G20, BRICS states demand an increased share of influence inside the group and established international infrastructure. Additionally, it recognises the limitation of participation in the G20 insiders club, which holds the dominant scenario. Programmes present an additional, external narrative, over which the established powers have no control.

BRICS' separate, autonomous narrative demonstrates the 'and' to it *both* forming part of the global infrastructure *and* forming a collective outside of this domain. This hybrid strategy seeks concord, not aggravation. A *both-and* orientation views parts as functioning separately, yet inclusive of others. Parts relate interdependently. The Confucian concept of *zhongyong*, also known as the *doctrine of the mean*, affords further understanding. Zhongyong advocates for a courageous (yong) equilibrium (zhong), for the harmonisation process between different parts. Zhongyong, says Qin (2010), is a form of dialectic, which does not isolate one part from another. Instead, it deals with the transformation of parts. Relations are central in this process-oriented thought, where everything is correlated, "interdependent and complementary. One cannot exist without the other, because one creates conditions for the formation, existence, and transformation of the other" (Qin, 2010: 138).

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<sup>46</sup> Discussed in chapter two.



BRICS' presentation of such a relational strategy is not curious. A Chinese dialectics, of co-theses, vis-à-vis Hegelian thesis and antithesis, is reasonable. China is a commanding player in BRICS. Qin presents clarification on Chinese dialectics, stating that:

“the synthesis is always the combination and inclusion of the two rather than the elimination or destruction of one by the other. This is the ‘both-and logic’...The essence of this inclusiveness is that it is a process which transforms the self and the other through recreation toward a new unity. As co-theses are by nature non-conflictual, the fundamental relationship between them is harmony rather than conflict” (Qin, 2010: 140).

BRICS' performances procedurally sustain a favourable hybrid environment, presenting the desire for its own territoriality, its own terms. It performs external to Bretton Woods, yet it discusses it with authority, as all states are participants. It, therefore, creates an alternative leadership structure, both external to and inside of international infrastructure. BRICS' interactions and rhetoric charges this order with its own signified and complete narrative.

Trubek (2012) suggests that BRICS countries' litigation and negotiation successes at the WTO have contributed to the rise of this hybrid system (Trubek, 2012). This is evidenced by Chinese aid programmes not aligning with the conditionalities of the liberal Washington Consensus<sup>47</sup> (Stuenkel, 2015: 112). BRICS states increasingly engage international partners upon a diverging track to that of Western liberalism. Their independent policy orientation challenges for influence in the global strategic environment. They articulate different ‘truths’, originating from multiple poles, vis-à-vis a singular hegemonic ‘truth’. This leads to the tension around territory and common ground. The treaty establishing the New Development Bank (NDB) illustrates the systematic pathway through which BRICS presents its alternative scenario for

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<sup>47</sup> The Washington Consensus presents a set of fundamentally market-driven policy prescriptions that were developed in the late 1980's by Washington based think tanks and policy agencies. They were presented as beneficial for Latin American countries recovering from economic crises but have widely been condemned for their neo-imperial conditionalities (Komlik, 2017).

developmental financing. By establishing a new institution it challenges not only the efficacy of established institutions but its organisational legitimacy.

BRICS' major formations, the NDB and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), are both charged in their constituting agreements to be complementary to existing international arrangements<sup>48</sup>. BRICS' goal is not to establish its own order. Instead, its establishment of alternative institutions forms part of its networked approach. Its own hybrid modality of limited formation and latent multi-institutionalism is a soft balancing<sup>49</sup> tactic that expands its influence and gains common ground through elastic relations. In short, BRICS' limited institutionalism advances greater multilateralism<sup>50</sup> and its strategy of multipolarity.

By engaging both institutions beyond its direct control and of its own making, BRICS complements or bridges the one with the other; providing evidence of its hybrid strategy. Gaining recognition from authoritative institutions<sup>51</sup> affords it substantial legitimacy. It lends influence to its narrative. This narrative advances that authority should not be held by external institutions, but directly by the sovereign states. It illustrates BRICS' perception that states should be the central locales of executive power. States must act independently and interdependently.

## **BRICS: DESIGN AND STRUCTURE**

In an exhibition of its ethos, the name BRICS is deliberately claimed to present a direct compound of the member states. It does not carry external signification such as NAM or G20. By averting an alternate name it maintains itself within its basis as a collective of

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<sup>48</sup> The NDB pursues "complementing the existing efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global growth and development" (BRICS, 2014a). The CRA proposes to: "contribute to strengthening the global financial safety net and complement existing international monetary and financial arrangements" (BRICS, 2015d).

<sup>49</sup> Soft balancing is discussed in chapter four.

<sup>50</sup> "The Bank shall mobilize resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries, complementing the existing efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global growth and development" (BRICS, 2014a)

<sup>51</sup> In 2018 the NDB received favourable to top ratings from two of the three major (Western) rating agencies, Standard and Poor's and Fitch (Xinhua, 2018b).

sovereigns. Considering that a 'bloc' signifies a group of countries working towards certain political interests, it could have been a suitable mode of discernment. BRICS, however, evades this term. By referring to itself as a 'bloc' it would create an internal/external divide, suggesting that member states all have the same interests and that non-members are excluded. Instead, BRICS constructs itself within the global collective, through Ministerial and leaders' meetings, through working groups and fora. The emanating documentation produces it, per se.

It is from *The Strategy of BRICS Economic Partnership* that the clearest definition of self emerges. Here the collective is referred to as "a dialogue and cooperation platform among member states...This platform aims to promote peace, security, prosperity and development in multipolar, interconnected and globalized world. The BRICS countries represent Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America, which gives their cooperation a transcontinental dimension making it especially valuable and significant" (BRICS, 2015b).

As a platform, BRICS suggests it to be a location, a place where norms and values are enacted. The Merriam-Webster dictionary classifies a platform as "a declaration of the principles on which a group of persons stand" (Merriam-Webster, 2018). This rationale is fitting as BRICS is foremost a place where individual nations pronounce on the principles they share, finding ways to put the means and ends they commonly hold into effect. Celso Amorim, a BRICS architect and former Brazilian Foreign Affairs and Defence Minister, explains that BRICS is "not a bloc, it's an association of common interests and common views which can exchange experiences in economic and social areas" (Amorim, 2017).

Before analysing and discussing the central, constituting principles of BRICS, it is instructive to regard which tools or mechanisms it uses programmatically. The choice and structure of founding documentation establish the understanding of its step-by-step course of action, allowing for greater comprehension of logic and relevant processes involved. These texts are institutional, they charge structures with ideas.

Most programmatic documents take the shape of legally non-binding political commitments. BRICS only has one treaty that is filed with the UN Treaty Collection,

complying with UN Charter Article 102<sup>52</sup>. This unique document requires individual comprehension. In May 2016 the multilateral *Agreement on the New Development Bank* was accordingly registered in the Treaty Collection. This makes it the only multilateral legal obligation that binds the BRICS countries. Its actualisation is recognition of self, offering potency and signifying 2016 as an offset for the group. The establishment of the NDB transcends will to engage, it has a logos of its own as well as a timeline. It seeks to constitute the networked order: to “reflect the close relations among the BRICS countries, while providing a powerful instrument for increasing their economic cooperation” (BRICS, 2014a).

Instead of building upon interest and desire, as most other political commitments do, the manifestation of the Bank is the actual foundation upon which further cooperation is built. In committing to “mobilize resources for infrastructure and sustainable development” it seeks to adjunct, not supplant, other financial institutions; to obtain influence and territory from strategic sectors (BRICS, 2014a). The Bank is an expression of BRICS’ alternative international narrative, it clarifies its scenario: “The creation of the Bank is an expression of the growing role of BRICS and other emerging market and developing countries (EMDCs) in the world economy, and their greater willingness to act independently in matters of international economic governance and development” (New Development Bank, 2017). Strategically it is forward-looking. It aims to deliver on the under-financed sustainable development and infrastructure needs. It seeks to position itself in this morally oriented and increasingly strategic niche. A clear attempt for influence, gained from trust and equal regard, the Bank does not assign traditional conditionalities. It also pursues positive impression by committing to “sound banking principles”, according the norms of international financial best practice (BRICS, 2014a).

The Bank presents itself as a solution, not a challenge to other institutions; “it shall also cooperate with international organizations and other financial entities” (BRICS, 2014a). The NDB, therefore, pursues financial influence through its accomplishments,

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<sup>52</sup> UN Charter Article 102: “Every treaty and every international agreement entered into by any Member of the United Nations after the present Charter comes into force shall as soon as possible be registered with the Secretariat and published by it” (United Nations, 1945).

disrupting the status quo. Bringing a broader contingency of peripheral countries to participate in the centre of global finance will change the landscape from within. If successful it will paradoxically do the opposite to what Goldman Sachs intended when it coined BRIC<sup>53</sup>. It will decentralise and balance international financial power, offering the group increased influence and legitimacy in the operation of international finance.

A further feature which differentiates the Bank from other BRICS political commitments is that it directly remarks on the participation of non-BRICS states. While presently operating only among BRICS states, the founding Agreement proposes that it will later open to all UN member states; further entrenching UN authority (BRICS, 2014a). Significantly, as the singular institution that binds the group together, its planned inclusion of external countries indicates its broader intentions for international development; the purpose of the group clearly supersedes its current form. By opening to the broader international community BRICS presents its first real territorialising mechanism, pressuring the existing global infrastructure. Its potential expanded membership commands legal and ordered operation. As the showcase institution it renders manifest potential for influence.

From its first summit Declaration, BRICS has “committed to advance the reform of international financial institutions, so as to reflect changes in the world economy” (BRICS, 2009). The establishment of the Bank realises the second of its pronged strategy, to maintain internal pressure for reform as well as building alternative mechanisms. Critically, while it lambasts established organisations for privileging its founding members, BRICS instils similar favours in the NDB. While it seeks legitimacy by according the presidency to be determined upon a rotational basis, the Agreement obliges that the president is elected from one of the founding members, privileging founding members ahead of possible future members (BRICS, 2014a). The Agreement embeds power within the original membership, committing the same act that it accuses institutions such as the World Bank and IMF of doing. Further, by establishing “founding members having 55% of total voting power”, it ensures that the original group maintains a permanent majority, regardless of future membership (BRICS, 2014a). This provision further complicates BRICS’ quest for legitimacy, presenting future aspirations for dominance. BRICS’ hybrid strategy

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<sup>53</sup> Discussed on page 38.

requires constant navigation between its own and established scenarios. This is a management task, which requires constant reinsurance of it not being in disagreement with the norm. This complicated path explains its lack of institutional development.

BRICS' vision of networked independence legitimates cooperation. Its political commitments stress cooperation as non-exclusive; they are stated to be open to other countries. BRICS' strategy is for members to sustain, not renege on, their relations with non-member states<sup>54</sup>. Transcending political allies, BRICS' strategy is about fostering mutually beneficial cooperative partnerships. Institutionalisation, with the NDB as the central example, allows for principles to be displayed and executed, therefore averting political fealty. The establishing Agreement of the NDB expresses that its founding not only reflects but also provides the instrument through which cooperation is realised. The political commitments embody the relations as to not require further compacts, while instruments such as the NDB allows for external cooperation. It becomes the nexus through which the principle of cooperation can be incorporated globally. It also seeks to "cooperate with international organizations and other financial entities, and provide technical assistance for projects to be supported by the Bank" (BRICS, 2014a).

The realisation of the NDB integrates BRICS into the domain of international organisations. It actively forms part of the international collective; it does not stand apart. Its interdependent formation and function are to obtain leverage to shape the global order accordingly. It does so by asserting its alternative narrative as a *sine qua non* for justifiable economic and social order; fulfilling the tasks that others have not.

Apart from the NDB Agreement, BRICS members use Declarations, agreements and MOUs to manifest its political programmes. It constructs its international scenario external to institutional formations, but internal to the expression of established principles. BRICS programmes deliberately give momentum to its intent. Instead of carrying legal obligation and shaped as political commitments, its programmes produce answers to questions that ask: if not the status quo, then what? Hollis and Newcomer's

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<sup>54</sup> "Each Party recognizes that the cooperation described in this Agreement is not exclusive and that each Party may enter into similar cooperation agreements with any other party or parties" (BRICS, 2014f).

(2009) model shows that political commitments in lieu of treaties allow for greater 1) flexibility, 2) credibility and 3) confidentiality (Hollis and Newcomer, 2009). 1) BRICS is by nature a loose and impermanent grouping; its agreements are strategically aimed at creating awareness, responding to evolving phenomena. Flexibility allows the absorption of shock; agreements are easily amendable, renegotiated and cancelled. 2) Credibility is a central facet of the entire BRICS project. Projecting credibility, through enacting values and norms is central to BRICS' public diplomacy campaign. Through political agreements BRICS oppose the negative consequences of reneging on expectations and legally binding terms. It, therefore, precludes negative judgment. 3) BRICS is a nascent project that largely remains the work of member state officials. The classified channels between states, as well as the select publication of its interactions, allow for configured confidentiality; BRICS controls the image that it projects outward. This allows for the intergovernmental interaction that provides it progressive learning and development.

BRICS operates centrally through these political commitments. Using Hollis and Newcomer's description of political commitments, as establishing national commitments between two or more states, the majority of BRICS agreements constitute pledges or rhetorical treaties (Hollis and Newcomer, 2009). The pledges made between BRICS countries develop their bond through reciprocal commitments, establishing continued relations. These formulations are deliberate, as political commitments are excluded from the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties and therefore are apparently excluded from legal consequences; "only politics governs the political commitment" (Hollis and Newcomer, 2009: 520). This practice, while avoiding international obligation advances their potential outcomes; "informality is best understood as a device for minimizing the impediments to cooperation" (Lipson, 1991: 500). Pledges make fewer demands and are open to amendments.

However, as much as BRICS maintains that its obligations are not legally binding, the matter of *pacta sunt servanda*<sup>55</sup> is as relevant for political agreements as it is for treaties. According to Lipson, legal scholars rarely differentiate between such agreements and official treaties (Lipson, 1991). This could be why BRICS has held much of its

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<sup>55</sup> "Treaties shall be complied with" (Solomon, 2008).

interactions internal; maintaining the nations as the discussants and building trust in-house. Lipson argues that “the dominant view is that international agreements, whatever their title, are legally binding upon the signatories, unless clearly stated otherwise” (Lipson, 1991: 502).

Though many do not, various political commitments do state that they are not legally binding. The *MOU on Cooperation among BRICS Export Credit Insurance Agencies* clearly states that it is “only a statement of co-operative intent and sets forth no legal obligations for any participant” (BRICS, 2014b), the *MOU on the Creation of the Joint BRICS Website* commits that it “is not an international treaty and does not create rights and obligations regulated by international law” (BRICS, 2015c). Clearest is the *Treaty for the Establishment of a BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement*, which nominally is a treaty, but states: “the CRA does not possess independent international legal personality” (BRICS, 2015d). The proviso of not being a legal entity is an undertaking to avoid direct subjugation to international law, asserting domestic judicature. The MOU on cooperation with the NDB and local development banks successfully compounds this sentiment: “this is a statement of good faith...it is not an international agreement nor does it create legally binding rights or obligations” (BRICS, 2014a). These expressions negate obligation. Many political commitments provide no such thing. They furnish an ambiguous commitment to international law, or simply display inconsistencies among an organisation with no central secretariat. The choice not to declare its commitments as treaties is a clear provision to maintain its structures strictly within its own ambit.

The MOU is the preferred form of BRICS political commitments. MOUs systematically express particular schedules and objectives. According to the *UN Handbook of Treaties*, an MOU “sets out operational arrangement under a framework of international agreement” (United Nations, 2012). These are action-oriented undertakings, which as international agreements have inherent official value. The authority of these documents is less determined by their form and more by their content. They are furthered by the acknowledged positions of signatories. BRICS makes its position clear by not using language that indicates international law. Whereas a treaty may designate “entry into force” (BRICS, 2014a), an MOU may instead be worded as “become effective” (BRICS,



2015e). The very classification as “Agreement” expresses binding nature, whereas the “Understanding” in MOU, indicates something less definitive. Furthermore, words such as “undertaken”, “terms” and “conditions” (BRICS, 2014a) incur a greater obligation, whereas “will” and “provisions” (BRICS, 2014b) avoids language that is binding. As such they do not provide exchanges of promise, but instead public statements of cooperation. BRICS MOUs are greatly aimed towards setting up systems of support through reciprocating gain, sharing<sup>56</sup> and cooperation; these are central across all BRICS political commitments. In this they “aim at promoting and strengthening the cooperation” (BRICS, 2016d), to “strengthen and enhance...relations among member countries” and “explore cooperation” (BRICS, 2015e). BRICS agreements demonstrate its *raison d’être* as principle-oriented, vis-à-vis structure or institution based.

While MOUs serve the function of building and exchanging knowledge, they also serve to mediate spaces comprising diverse agents. BRICS countries have great differences in their legal, political, social and other systems. Unlike its counterpart or counterpoint the G7, which shares certain tangible features<sup>57</sup>, BRICS represents a functionally and ideologically diverse group. Achieving momentum, through building commonality and trust forms part of its procedural aims. Political agreements are mechanisms to attain corresponding cultures amongst the officials taking part in the formative phases, but also for populations who are newly brought into contact. The agreements are productions of public diplomacy; constructing interfaces among BRICS publics, setting up infrastructure and enabling learning. It thereby manifests clear communication channels of shared purpose. These operations align beliefs with practice. They produce and exhibit values, often emanating from and directed beyond that of local systems. They are however relationally organic as they are created through the joining of national bodies. Rallying around core values the political commitments facilitate and develop political persuasion, through familiarisation and acceptance. The difference in culture is pardoned through

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<sup>56</sup> “In order to support and encourage trade and investments between and among the BRICS countries, Participants agree to assist each other in obtaining information for risk assessment and claims management with regards to projects in their respective countries. The Participants may, periodically, share experience on export credit issues and investment insurance in areas of common interest” (BRICS, 2014b).

<sup>57</sup> The G7 are all advanced liberal capitalist countries. It comprises the “world’s most industrially advanced economies” (G7, 2017).

openness and willingness to exchange. Member states' efforts to align show a will beyond association. BRICS aspires for the trust that is substantiated by bridging difference through cooperation.

## **EXPLORING ACTION PLANS**

Summit Declarations form the central communication tools of BRICS. They are, for the purposes of this study, not considered programmatic but rather discussed as functional, in chapter four. The Action Plans, introduced at the Sanya Summit in 2011, are appended to the Declarations. Between 2011 and 2014 the Action Plans were named together with the Declaration<sup>58</sup>, but since 2015 the Declaration and Action Plan have been disconnected in what can be interpreted as a means to structurally distinguish the documents. The result is that these Action Plans, instead of being presented as mere appendages, take on a life of their own. Due to this deliberate detachment and their programmatic nature Action Plans are analysed here.

An Action Plan maps the sequence of tasks as well as the resources required for a strategy to be successful (Business Dictionary, 2017). The 2011 Action Plan is purposed as "laying the foundation for the BRICS cooperation" (BRICS, 2011c). It is instructive that this document refers to "foundation", suggesting the commencement of a coherent strategy; committing resources to goals. This document neatly divides "enhance existing cooperation programmes" from "new areas of cooperation" and "new areas to explore" (BRICS, 2011c). The continued publication of these categories was either not a matter of importance or regarded as excessively ambitious. This procedure was not repeated. Another feature that was only the case in 2011 and changed subsequently was the language used. The points of that Plan speak instructively to the very persons executing it. For example: "hold the third meeting", "continue to hold" and "encourage cooperation" (BRICS, 2011c). From 2012 the language evolved. Events were now merely listed, thereby less determined. This also spoke to a non-specific and therefore comprehensive audience. Less particularity ensured fewer obligations, obviating responsibility and possible remonstrations.

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<sup>58</sup> For example: The eThekweni Declaration and Action Plan.

The format for the years 2012-2014 maintained similarity. Throughout these years the order of points presented a hierarchy of importance. In each document the meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers on the margins of the UNGA would be mentioned first, designating this gathering as the most important outside the leaders' summits. It also distinguished the central authority to the UNGA, suggesting that BRICS' form is not only incumbent upon its own meetings, but that its partnership at international fora plays a constituting part. Meeting on the margins of external events has been a central means that BRICS has used to build its relations, as well as its influence. It has variously met at the World Bank, G20 and IMF, but also places such as the *Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering*, an initiative of the G7 that all BRICS countries are members of. Its regular assembly at these external spaces affords for a strengthening tactical interface, as well as elevating its relevance in the eyes of other states.

Its Action Plans foregrounds it at ministerial meetings and is followed by meetings between working groups and consultations among permanent missions and embassies. They furthermore specifically mention meetings on the margins of sustainable development, climate and environment-related international fora. The recognition of these meetings designates them as useful and relevant. These are potentially chosen as places where BRICS could make its mark, as later established by their featuring centrally in the strategy of the NDB<sup>59</sup>. The 2014 document consolidated a similar, expanded structure to that of previous years by introducing a new phenomenon: commencing the hosting of events which in the past BRICS members would attend externally<sup>60</sup>. The materialisation of these kinds of events demonstrates the creation of its own narrative.

There is a substantial shift from 2014 to 2015. Both 2015 and 2016 include significantly more points than those preceding them, from 23 in 2014 to 72 in 2015 and then 136 in 2016. This growth, together with the introduction of the subheading "other initiatives of the Russian Chairship" (2015) and "key initiatives during India's BRICS Chairmanship" (2016) suggests signs of individual countries contending over control of

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<sup>59</sup> The Bank is set up "to address infrastructure gaps and sustainable development needs" (New Development Bank, 2014a: 1).

<sup>60</sup> For example: the inaugural *BRICS Seminar of Officials and Experts on Population Matters*.

what had been largely group-based affairs. The separately named 2015 Plan moves away from listing preference to UNGA ministerial meetings. Together with reneging to stress “consultative” meetings at “the margins of relevant...international fora” (mentioned 2012-2014), it instead refers to internal matters, first. This is supported by the significant increase in internal fora and meetings.

The decided shift beyond official governmental diplomacy presents a consequential development. This makes place for an increased number of events that relate to public diplomacy and cultural exchange; where the interactive production and sharing of values is central. Before 2015 diversity of BRICS cultures were only affirmed (2010) and cooperation was to be explored (2011 and 2014) or encouraged (2012 and 2014); exchange among cultures, at least in the Action Plans, remained in word only.

The sprawling Action Plans since 2015 bring various public diplomacy and cultural exchange programmes into being. These motion BRICS beyond the official sphere and increasingly invoke public operation. In 2015 the first meeting between the Ministers of Culture led to the instructive *BRICS Agreement on Cultural Cooperation*. A joint website was launched, a youth summit held and an MOU signed creating the BRICS Network University. There was also a contest and forum for young scientists and entrepreneurs, while exchange among BRICS media professionals was mooted. Perhaps the most telling was the introduction of the Civil Society Forum, joining the Academic, Think Tank, as well as Business and Financial Fora as associate platforms meeting before the summit. By inviting one hundred civil society participants, from healthcare, education and sustainable development BRICS strategically brought public consultation into the official proceedings, before antagonism manifested on the outside. This introduction suggests official apprehension of the possible challenges the group could face as its influence advances. It hereby also profits from, recognises and tactically checks the ideas of non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

According to the World Alliance for Citizen Participation’s *Enabling Environment Index* which “examines the conditions within civil society work” both Brazil and South Africa perform above average, while Russia, China and India all tendering particularly poor results when it comes to the environment for civil participation (CIVICUS, 2013). Though

the BRICS platform presents an external reality, the different compositions and conditions of member states could make for a divergent reality. Apart from restraining resistance, these platforms are constructed to facilitate direct social interaction among member countries, a place for principles and values espoused by the leaders to take root. Described by President Putin: “the role of people’s diplomacy in building trust and understanding between countries...is especially important” (Putin, 2015). The 2015 *Civil BRICS Forum* met to discuss “building racial, ethnic and religious tolerance and non-discrimination, regulation of migration and integration of migrants” (BRICS, 2015j). Such meetings and platforms are potent public diplomacy mechanisms. They incorporate internally, at an official level, what traditionally would be the substance of alternative bodies, such as NGOs. These meetings lay the foundation of a show of unison around shared values; projecting a positive, progressive and inclusive image.

The Plans are public diplomacy tools. They are crafted to impress. The very first listed event of the 2016 Plan is suggestively a *Women Parliamentarians’ Forum*. The prioritising of this new event points to it being designed to respond to the contemporary international movement for improved representation of women. Further such initiatives advance the development of inter-group interaction and exchange, including the *BRICS Friendship Cities Conclave*. The inclusion of the subheading *People-to-People & Business Exchange* shows that the exclusive official diplomacy from before has been surpassed, to focus on public diplomacy. Many events launched in 2015 have been repeated, while new initiatives such as the consolidation of the commercial partnership under a *BRICS Trade Fair*, the organisation of a *BRICS Under-17 Football Tournament*, hosting of a *BRICS Convention of Tourism* as well as *BRICS Film Festival* all offer access and promotion of local peoples and cultures. These events function as bridges, accessed not only by officials, but affording the broader public of the host country the opportunity to showcase itself to the people of other member states. These are mechanisms to better understand fellow member states, to inculcate BRICS solidarity and even identity.

In total, the evolution of the Action Plans demonstrates the group’s systematic and consolidated growth. When an event is held it is very likely to be held again the next year. The *BRICS Fortaleza Summit Compliance Report* suggests that “BRICS countries

complied well with the development commitments at the core of their agenda”, achieving around 70% compliance in 2014 and close to that average at the three previous summits (Larionova and Kirton, 2015). The public expression of values has progressed steadily, yet it remains the documents that offer its clearest expression.

## **PROGRAMMATIC DOCUMENTS: DEMONSTRATING A GLOBAL ETHOS**

Programmatic documents reciprocally advance the principles that it employs through its utilisation. These documents are usually relatively terse, frequently under five pages long. The exceptions are the NDB and CRA agreements, which have monetary obligations. These are laid out in greater contractual detail, their purpose greatly different from that of political commitments that do not have set timelines; these either continue indefinitely or stipulate provisions for renegotiation. These properties, together with the freedom to withdraw upon notice periods of six months or less, provide for the managing of relations and greater agency, obviating complicating ramifications. It also proposes that the group is bigger than any individual country. If one member were to leave, the group would subsist. Chiefly, this is to ensure amicable cooperation. The documents are clearly structured not to impose. Regardless of the name, whether MOU, agreement or Declaration the programmatic documents are soft pacts that offer the same format and seek the same outcome. It is within the recitals of each document that the terms of agreement are laid out and that values are centrally expressed. These are therefore put forward as the channels through which commitment is to be carried out. Though mostly non-legal these are nevertheless duly formal, suggesting earnestness. The documents bring different countries into consolidation, creating the platform that allows the networking among them.

BRICS’ rhetoric substantiates the world as multipolar. In 2015 *The Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership* was adopted as a key code towards the desired outcomes of advancing “peace, security, prosperity and development in multipolar, interconnected and globalised world” (BRICS, 2015b). These collective aims are conditional on the acceptance and partnership of reciprocal sovereignty; to “accomplish the cooperation...and to exchange information on a regular basis, the Parties shall proceed in accordance with their respective internal rules” (BRICS, 2015e).

The agency of BRICS is inherently limited; interaction among the states is premised to “account for national interests, priorities, growth and development strategies of Member States” (BRICS, 2015b). The individuation of each member is underwritten by their “commitment to international law and recognition of the central role of the United Nations” (BRICS, 2015b). The role of the group is to unite individual states in trust, committing to cooperation. The ethos embodied in the political commitments forms the intergovernmental vehicle towards achieving the goals of the group. The Strategy accordingly describes its basic principles as “openness, sharing of information and consensus in decision-making” (BRICS, 2015b).

The principles that form the core of BRICS and its programmatic documentation are 1) equality, 2) sharing and 3) cooperation. BRICS countries’ foundation in sovereignty establishes their equality, lending towards an integrated relationship of trust and increased partnership. Equality is expressed through willing mutualism or the practice of reciprocating understanding, learning and endeavouring towards consensus. One document puts forward that the “striving for strengthening and further developing...cooperation among the BRICS countries (is) based on the principles of equality and mutual benefit” (BRICS, 2015f). Hereby equality is provided as a condition for group accomplishment. The MOU itself is a means to advance (as its title suggests) mutual *understanding*. It is an appeal for coordinated expression of intent, constructing greater interaction between the agents, not by declaration, but by consigning intent: “parties intend to establish a working group” (BRICS, 2015f).

Programmatic documents project BRICS as a developing partnership, committed to open and mutual interaction. This occurs through the commitment to and execution of the networking events where ideals are performed. Such expression of stayed commitment intends for increased opening up and awareness of each other. Here the *BRICS Agreement on the Cooperation in the Field of Culture* is an excellent example. This Agreement commits to what it reflexively calls BRICS values: “the spirit of openness, inclusiveness, equality, respect for cultural diversity, and mutual respect and learning” (BRICS, 2015g). The values prepare the table for cultural dialogue and friendship.

Facilitating a commensurate and sympathetic climate prepares a favourable space of interaction for these disparate countries.

Emphasis on equality is directed toward establishing cooperation, toward embodying the commensurate multilateral system. It, however, does not create many tangible measures to ensure responsibility and maintenance. The 2015 MOU on the *Creation of the Joint BRICS Website* was set up to open BRICS countries to each other and the world; “to disseminate information on BRICS values, goals and practical activities among the public of our countries as well as the international community” (BRICS, 2015c). Through the MOU the respective Foreign Affairs Ministries, as parties, committed a joint effort of public diplomacy. Members were enjoined to “maintain properly their national modules”, their news feeds, as well as “posting of all the information in the official language of the State of that Party in each module of the BRICS website” (BRICS, 2015c). As chair, Russia launched the website *infobrics.org*. The website which was envisioned to be adopted by all members remains poorly represented, except for Russia which is the only state to constitute it. Though all countries are given equal access and agency through the MOU it is unclear whether the parties agreed on this specific site. While equal members’ independence guarantees positive interaction, it also complicates decision making, as there is no central authority.

Furthermore, each country already has its own efforts of public diplomacy, including websites of the respective Foreign Affairs Ministries, none of which links or mentions this BRICS site. In the years following the MOU, India (2016), China (2017) and South Africa (2018) have all developed their own, additional websites for their chairmanship. Meant as an effort to synchronise, through manifest equality, the project of a joint website has produced a disaggregated, muddled result. A further Russian effort to coordinate BRICS’ affairs was presented in the form of a *virtual secretariat*. At its announcement in 2013 Russian Deputy Finance Minister Sergei Storchak said: “We will depend on modern technology and establish an electronic secretariat so that we avoid getting into too much administrative work. An electronic secretariat would store all necessary documents and information” (The BRICS Post, 2013). Two years later, utilising its chairmanship, Russia again pushed for the establishment of a virtual secretariat.



Though it is possible that it has been launched and is maintained confidentially there has been no further official mention thereof.

The nonexistence of a (public) secretariat motions member states' wariness of external institutions to also be relevant internal to BRICS. Instead of aggregating their agency into an additional body, the different states each chooses to manage its own affairs, so as to avoid overreach and dominance in the group. This illustrates consistency; BRICS' powers are differentiated, not pooled. Chairmanship of the group rotates on a yearly basis, maintaining power internally and central to each member state, not deployed into a supplementary body. As an expression of its equality, each state rather creates a new scenario each year to avoid alliance creep. While it constructs a Bank with specified, tangible obligations, it dodges the management of a persuasive, intangible platform that would require extensive negotiation.

Openness and equality are appeals to engender commonality. This allows the overcoming of obstacles between BRICS, such as the novelty of the project and the divergence between states. It expresses a willingness to relate; allows for and encourages credibility to take root in a friendly atmosphere. Essentially it establishes space for sharing and cooperation to take place. When the *MOU on Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation* recites "recognising...principles of voluntary participation, equality, mutual benefit, reciprocity", it is essentially creating space for relational exploration between the parties (BRICS, 2015h).

Programmatic documents often execute upon the declarations made at summits. For example, the 2011 Sanya Declaration authorises the need "to explore cooperation in the sphere of science, technology and innovation" (BRICS, 2011c). BRICS documents function as the pathways for their collaboration. Here equality and mutual benefit are made practical by "harnessing synergies", toward the stated objective of establishing "a strategic framework for cooperation" while "utilising shared experiences and complementarities" (BRICS, 2015h).

The group manifests equality through its various political commitments, such as the *MOU on Culture*, which states that: "Any amendment to this Agreement shall be made

by agreement of all of the Parties” (BRICS, 2015g). Equality *in toto* is, however, a complicated matter. This is especially seen in the light of monetary obligations. The CRA has three levels of state liability: China commits 41%; India, Brazil and Russia each 18% and South Africa 5%. Their access limits are also differentiated; indicating that though they express equality, member states are conferred different capacities, forestalling equality of contribution and therefore complete equality (BRICS, 2015d). Participation by all member states is however strategically paramount to what percentage each commits. The comprehensive partnership presents a shared commitment to ideals.

Principles such as equality and openness set the platform for exchange among the parties. Sharing is at the very core of BRICS, it links the different members into one entity; open interaction is the engine of the networked order. There is only one programmatic document that does not stress exchange or sharing centrally, the legally binding NDB Agreement. The interfaces that bring BRICS together serve the purpose of sharing information and providing reciprocal knowledge. Essentially this is not the sharing of goods or other tangible items, but rather of knowledge and the learned experience; it opens a space of flows. These are the assets of the information economy and through centralising these features BRICS concentrates a network economy, allowing for unrestricted gain through access. In this information economy, the resources are intangible and non-exhaustive, interest is accommodated by working together and benefits are not determined in a winner-takes-all scenario, but can be multiplied and shared.

Propagating a relationship of mutual benefit is central to this attraction. Operating through networks, BRICS mostly does not have to replicate institutions that already exist in the different countries. The BRICS Network University is just such an example. It brings together different schools and departments from across the states to share their academic ways and means, therefore not requiring new structures to be built. This mode of operation ensures the efficient sharing of skills while avoiding redundancy. It also contributes to different states frequenting themselves with the others, allowing the development of shared understanding and a shared narrative. Herein BRICS functions as

intergovernmental communication mechanism bringing together best practice in an incorporated system of exchange; benefitting from sharing instead of competing.

Most BRICS documents refer to information sharing. Yet with no enforcement mechanism the act of sharing remains interest-driven. Sharing is encouraged as to allow for positive reciprocity, win-win relations, which require the persuasion of trust. BRICS political commitments are tools to rhetorically construct format and authority for sharing to take place. When the *Agricultural Action Plan 2012-2016* stipulates that “BRICS countries shall share/arrange/mobilize financial resources”, its first point stresses the “creation of basic agricultural exchange system of BRICS countries” (BRICS, 2012a). Promoting shared responsibility is a common feature and a clear goal emerging across formative BRICS initiatives. In the Agricultural Plan equal obligation is bestowed upon all members, each state receiving chairmanship over a set topic for their national working groups to investigate and prepare subsequent feedback. This practice of sharing responsibility, ensuring that mechanisms bestow responsibility to each state, is a central feature of BRICS.

In preparing its combined document *Towards a Long-Term Strategy for BRICS*, the BRICS Think Tank Council demonstrated exemplary sharing. It organised its project across five pillars, which they then delegated to each country, with working groups comprising at least one member from each other country. This was done so that the “diagnosis and recommendations corresponds to the broad view shared by various members of society in the five countries” (BRICS Think Tank Council, 2015). While the principle is underscored, the details are left vague as to not impose, specify or manage impressions. The “exchange of policy perspectives and priorities lays an essential basis” that underpins the *BRICS Trade and Investment Cooperation Framework* (BRICS, 2013d). It is in “sharing policy practices”, that BRICS constructs its expanded knowledge economies. Its willingness to exchange knowledge is not a selfless act but instead promises a four-fold return, benefitting from the different cultures across the nations. Openness to understanding each other lays the groundwork for expanded ability and expertise; by these means the group advances towards networked economies. The networked order is based upon reciprocal and cooperative benefit.

While programmatic documentation centrally constructs official commitments, thereby compiling layers of organisational structure, the shift towards greater civic participation has opened these programmes and learnings to the public, building further capacity to inform upon policy. Nevertheless, commonality through exchange is difficult when members are so divergent. While the network ensures diverging individual contributions, it still requires a common language. Assuring global access, sharing common ground, BRICS documents are compiled in the English language. The 2015 Agreement on Cultural Cooperation explains that “(T)he English language shall be used as a working language”; the CRA says that “the official language of the CRA shall be English”, while the MOU on Cooperation among BRICS Export Credit Insurance Agencies clearly states that “all written communications required or permitted under the MOU shall be in English” (BRICS, 2015g; BRICS, 2015d; BRICS, 2014b). Though English is only an official language in India and South Africa, its use standardises exchange among members and opens access to international publics. It also decentralises agency, suggesting BRICS to be a global formation and not dominated by one of its powerful members forcing its language on the others.

As a collective of individual entities, BRICS is sustained and advanced through cooperation, realising its multilateral network. There is no BRICS without cooperation; it is therefore that it is stressed in every single political commitment and every document it releases. The greater the exercise of other principles, the greater cooperation is needed and subsequently formed between members. While the goal of the political commitment is often plainly stated as cooperation, its way is likely to involve equality and sharing. The *BRICS Trade and Investment Cooperation Framework* assays the promotion of “trade, investment and economic cooperation among the BRICS” through “enhancing information exchange on trade/investment policies and business opportunities through mechanisms including websites for trade/investment information sharing” (BRICS, 2013d). The *MOU between Competition Authorities* offers details of the causal relation between cooperation and outcomes; “cooperation between parties will contribute to improve and strengthen effectiveness” (BRICS, 2016d). Cooperation is, therefore, the supporting essence and gives force to BRICS. The purpose of this MOU, among others, is to set up an institutional partnership between parties through a general framework for multilateral cooperation.

MOUs and political agreements provide the substance for the exercise of this momentum. By linking two or more entities together the establishing documents gives shape and substance.

While BRICS' organic documentation narrowly concords to international law, an informative phenomenon appears across programmatic documentation. In some MOUs BRICS state that "all cooperation pursuant to this Memorandum of Understanding will be subject to domestic law in force in the territories of the Parties" (BRICS, 2016d). This comment affirms national supremacy, suggesting all actions to remain to the sovereign discretion of the individual states. This is a feature of its non-binding preferences. This particular MOU explicitly states that it "shall not be considered as an international treaty and does not establish rights or obligations for the Parties" (BRICS, 2016d). This allocation of authority, as expressed earlier, introduces ambiguity and begs the question as to the position of international law. This MOU further includes as an annexure, reference to the actual corresponding domestic legislation of each BRICS member state. The peculiarity of this order suggests the cooperation of states transcends legal cohesion provided under international law, developing special bonds, when not alliances. These provisions, allowing sovereign freedom, engender an insider/outsider divide; institutionalising, contrary to their commitments to international law, a unity among particular states. Though it is careful in its construction not to form an alliance, there are nonetheless features of syndication appearing.

Further agreements render similar assessment. While the NDB Agreement is submitted to the UN Treaty Collection it also states that it is subject "to the laws, programs and policies of respective governments and, specifically, to laws regulating banking secrecy and regulations to which each Party may be subject in their respective countries" (BRICS, 2014a). Some documents, such as the MOU between the NDB and local development banks commit large swathes (here about a tenth) of its content to detail how it is not legally binding. Instead, it seeks to instil trust in the individual supremacy of each state; establishing the foundations of the network (BRICS, 2015e). This realisation of cooperation significantly imparts authority through the network, avoiding external authority or institutionalisation. This raises a further question: if it can function together

fluently, then what does this prove? This regards central, yet unanswered matters of international regulation, law and the role of established international agencies. Increasingly, BRICS will function as a global governance experiment.

A central way to avoid confrontation proves to be the entangling of interests - further opening up allows for greater cooperation. While constructing new initiatives the documentation importantly also activates collective presence in the UN and other international organisations. BRICS' initiatives act as a way to bring divergent countries together, facilitating unified positions in the UN. The Agricultural Cooperation Action Plan suggests the creation of a BRICS grouping in the UN's *Food and Agriculture Organisation*; to collaboratively "act also within the United Nations Food Program" (BRICS, 2012a). These initiatives advance generally what the BRICS *Trade and Investment Cooperation Framework* refers to specifically as "strengthening coordination in the World Trade Organisation's Doha Round, as well as in other multilateral fora" (BRICS, 2013d). Strategic coordination inside international organisations allows the collective to push toward resolutions while maintaining internal good standing with the international community. As a precaution, such as not defaulting and causing internal issues, platforms such as CRA maintain central links and provisions set by the IMF. Doing this prevents internal contentions, maintaining financial resolutions on the outside of the platform.

What its unity allows for is a greater collective say. While the type of coordination within BRICS takes place first according to domestic laws, international standards are used to maintain unity and correspondence. In order to ensure correlation of means, its interactions are premised, as detailed in the Economic Strategy "within the UN system as well as with other international economic organizations in accordance with the fundamental principles of the UN Charter" (BRICS, 2015b). Correspondence to the UN is also used to annul any potential threat, as well as to legitimate its interactions. This is seen in the Network University MOU pledging to implement the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's Constitution, Article 1: "to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations" (BRICS, 2015i). In adopting these goals as its own

initiatives, BRICS establishes cooperation not only *in* the UN but also *with* the UN<sup>61</sup>. It legitimates the UN and in return legitimates itself.

Cooperation is both a strategic way and an end. The commitments are employed to build forward; they are evolutionary. Most documents do not simply establish, but seek to “strengthen cooperation” (BRICS, 2012a). Centrally these established frameworks are “open ended and progressive”, with sustained cooperation leading to partnership. Common among recitals of various documents is the charge to pursue and effectuate the summit Declarations. These undertakings detail the narrow chain of command which allow for following through on promises.

Through its burgeoning interaction and deliberation, the group is increasingly creating a cooperation-driven international system. Though BRICS originally took shape through the official, technical realm, it is increasingly expanding to include the public. As a final illuminating case study the *Action Plan of Promoting BRICS Media Cooperation* is a pledge to “building a fairer international communication order” (BRICS, 2017d). If the NDB is implementing a form of the NAM-inspired NIEO then this Action Plan strikingly reminds of NWICO’s plans to reshape global media representation. It offers a timely attempt to “break the information monopoly and rebalance international public opinion...building a fairer international communication order” (BRICS, 2017d). It represents the decided push for greater BRICS influence. Through this Action Plan BRICS seeks to expand its public diplomacy campaign beyond governmental projects and into the realm of private and state-affiliated institutions; advancing national interests. Cooperation remains central, while the agent changes from official to private. Legitimacy is however feigned as advancing the interests of the parties involved. Its execution is to balance what it regards unjust media practices and domination of public opinion.

Through broad participation it seeks to develop counter-narratives; slowly constructing new scenarios. Significantly this suggests greater group involvement in the functioning of global politics. The first point on its agenda is “jointly sending out press releases on international major issues, improve coordination on topics-setting...firmly

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<sup>61</sup> See reference to the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation on page 103.

safeguard international equity and justice as well as lawful rights and interests of developing countries” (BRICS, 2017d). Coordinating the same message across these different countries builds parity and unity. Not with each other directly but through exposure to the same message, indirectly standardising the messages that audiences receive; shaping opinions and consent. To execute jointly upon these matters is in effect to coordinate as a bloc; building and shaping public opinion of the greater world. Though countries might be disparate and might differ in reaction, the exposure they receive will be such as to soft balance the status quo through a rhetoric of legitimation and delegitimation.

The Plan confirms that media outlets, a broad contingent of private and state-run organisations from across member states “agreed to strengthen media’s social responsibility”, to “demonstrate the achievements and prospects of BRICS economic development, and social progress” (BRICS, 2017d). The direction given to media outlets is to report kindly on BRICS, for them to persuade publics of BRICS’ work and to pursue greater convergence of opinion. Furthermore, it is to associate BRICS with the norms and values it espouses (BRICS, 2017d). Through joint interviews and press releases, it not only achieves unity of opinion of itself and the world at large, but also unity regarding the architecture that constructs and emits its messages. The persuasion, of the outlets themselves, is BRICS’ prime target. Through this broadly endorsed Action Plan they seem one step closer to this goal.

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter has detailed how BRICS does not seek to break down the international form, but achieve power inside of it, producing its own narrative and scenario. Its operations function to pick apart (delegitimate) and align to (legitimate) features of the existing order. Political commitments are BRICS’ building blocks, the foundations that shape its will and form. They are configurations where principles, values and norms are presented and where its ethos is postured. Programmes motion toward and do not greatly implement alternative infrastructures. They afford an understanding of style and are often more about appearance than implementation. This is evidenced by the failed website. Instead, individual members each use BRICS as a mechanism to pursue their own interests,



preserving independence and avoiding notions of an alliance. Baracuhy writes: “We are not living in a period of revisionisms, but of adjustments and reforms to the existing rules and structures that underlie the global order. Today’s rising powers are ‘status-quo powers’” (Baracuhy, 2012). BRICS’ strategic communications motion towards the international acknowledgement of this perception, pursuing reform and the agency it feels it is denied by dominant forces.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ANALYSIS OF BRICS' ORGANIC DOCUMENTATION**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter has detailed how BRICS does not wish to revolutionise global governance; instead, it pursues power from within a stable global governance system. BRICS' rhetorical strategy to manifest and represent the international order is based upon advancing its own legitimacy, while delegitimizing dominant powers; occupying greater agency. The central question in this chapter asks how BRICS pursues its quest for influence and reform in global governance through the Declarations that emerge from its summit diplomacy. The BRICS summit Declarations, the organic outcome document of its yearly leaders' summit signifies the functioning of BRICS. They explicate the properties and thought of evolving operational structure. These documents substantiate the clearest articulation of BRICS' endeavour towards securing influence in global governance. They are displays of significance. In BRICS' pursuit for recognition, credibility and legitimacy, the summits and their Declarations detail its alternative, yet internal, regime in networked order. To consider BRICS as an entity of global governance this chapter will first articulate it as an intergovernmental regime. The various concomitant concepts and features that constitute the regime are discussed before looking directly at BRICS' summit diplomacy and global governance. Exclusive use of summit Declarations narrows in on BRICS' core strategies and tactics.

#### **THE BRICS REGIME**

BRICS is formed by sovereign states collaborating in a realist approach; as a rationalist pursuit for power. Haslam's view of realism is useful, affirming that under nominal multilateralism states rationally maximise their self-interest (Haslam in Goodin, 2010). Yet, while realism traditionally suggests coercion as the path to interests, BRICS rather holds cooperation and therefore decentralisation central. Cooperation as central means allows BRICS countries, in the realist guise, to maintain a differentiated pursuit of national

interests. Narrow national interests are complemented by comprehensive strategic interests: the achievement of a broadened spectrum of means and ways that will facilitate and permit the greater amassing of individual benefit.

BRICS' unified forum does not accord with individual interests. It never reflects specific individual national projections, nor does it combine to propose a collective BRICS Consensus. Instead, its projected goal is always distinguished as being of universal concern<sup>62</sup>. This pursuit of collective influence to actualise, not dismantle, the multilateral international domain, is where its interests play out. As discussed in the previous chapter the norms and values it utilises as concepts are embedded in the prevailing UN order that it emerges from. Its hybrid strategy, therefore, sees it conceiving itself as realist and idealist, both situated inside (allowing the occupation of leadership and dissemination of critique) as well as outside (avoiding responsibility) of the established system. This produces new modalities for achieving common ground. In doing this it radically avoids dominating practices of international institutions.

Incorporated under their primacy as sovereign states, BRICS members converge around the ideas, norms, rules, and expectations captured in each summit Declaration. These features establish it, according to Krasner's (1983) definition, as a regime in international relations (Krasner, 1983). Regimes are mostly incorporeal, they exercise a normative framework. The broader order consists of a "system of territorially based and sovereign states that interact in the absence of any central government...regimes are regularly nested in international order in the sense that they build on the foundation provided" (Young, 1989: 14). Regimes see actors engage through engaging principles; they do not have administrative capacities. The creation of a regime is consolidated when individual states, not bound in alliance or bloc, collaborate in pursuit of consolidated interests; regimes are therefore instances of international cooperation. The regime can be considered the institution, the strategic ways and means, where the broader order is the end. BRICS' formation as a regime is appropriate. It strategically embodies the established normative framework, pressuring other regimes, such as Bretton Woods institutions.

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<sup>62</sup> "We are committed to working towards an inclusive, transparent and participative intergovernmental process for building a universal and integrated development agenda with poverty eradication as the central and overarching objective" (BRICS, 2014c).

Tactically BRICS uses its high-profile leaders' summits, together with the resulting summit Declaration, as its central governing substance. The BRICS regime consolidates the individual power and knowledge of member states to form a rational pursuit of interests. It finds consensus among states based on sovereign interest before pragmatic implementation.

This new cooperative regime functions akin to OPEC's diffused agency in broader international relations (Tudoroiu, 2012). While OPEC started from limited capacity, of focused input between disaggregated nations, it gained power through its collectivised approach. Though it holds sway over only a single economic commodity (oil), OPEC affects broader geopolitical influence. BRICS commences from a similar, yet expanded approach, coordinating among countries whose leverage over an increasing portion of the global economy and power affords it agency. The BRICS regime de-personalises this undertaking, cloaking individual pursuits under a broader international demand for legitimacy.

Both OPEC and BRICS, attuned to the realist view, calls for a modified, state-centred international economic order. Akin to contemporary BRICS, the *Financial Times* wrote, in 1961 of OPEC, that "it is, indeed, the psychological effect of OPEC's very existence which may have the most important consequences" (Tudoroiu, 2012).<sup>63</sup> Singular countries may not have corresponding interests or characteristics. The matters that separate these states, as studied at length (Cameron, 2011; Laïdi, 2012; Armijo, 2007; Pant, 2013), is of little significance and relevance here. BRICS focuses on what it is and wants, avoiding otherwise. Though member states are not constitutionally analogous, its regime emerges from and is ordered by the same, rule-based order. BRICS should be seen in this light. Its regime is institutionally concentrated; its members are beneficiaries of the existing system. BRICS is a new exemplary regime (exclusive) in the established (inclusive) networked international order.

The BRICS regime categorically precludes singular leadership by any one member state. Nor is BRICS a determined feature. Nowhere is BRICS presented as fixed reality. The

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<sup>63</sup> The strategic similarities between these two entities appear to be striking; further comparative analysis could prove significant and illuminating.

procedural manifestation of the regime, exhibiting beneficial relationships among members, is its power; the greater invigoration of network order is its end. It is here that the nation states engage, in the tangible, real and inclusive system, above the BRICS regime. In the networked order, power does not exist in a vacuum; it moves through communication, it is obtained through displacement. Communication intimately affects the functioning of power. It works to gain trust; its strategic use centrally constructs and maintains relationships (Castells, 2013). The rise of the network order, the communication order, entails the change in the relationship of power. Boundaries and frameworks are transcended. It is, therefore, that nation-states change their structure, their functions and understandings of power, ensuring they maintain command (Castells, 2013). This evolving nature and form of power suggest that once significant geopolitical change occurs, regardless of responsibility, continued BRICS operation appears unlikely. As a vehicle for reform BRICS will cease its reason to be if it fully achieves its aims. This will entail the broader order emulating the regime.

The development of instruments, processes and goals strategically evolves the regime. One such tactic is presented in the expansion towards broader participation, avoiding exclusivity. The Russian Valdai Discussion Club and Chinese Foreign Minister were the first to comment on the potential emergence of expanded *BRICS Plus* formation (Wang, 2017; Lissovolik, 2017). BRICS Declarations readily refer to and advocate for the development of external countries, BRICS Plus presents a consolidated approach. The 2017 summit Declaration affirmed the thinking around an emergent BRICS Plus formation<sup>64</sup>. Though it offered no substantiation to this approach it does prove that a broader more comprehensive regime is central to BRICS' goals<sup>65</sup>. It is an enactment of the network it wants to invigorate. What the G20 is to the G7, BRICS Plus may be to BRICS. It may offer a persuasive expression of a new global integration model. BRICS' expansion

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<sup>64</sup> "We shall also strive towards broad partnerships with EMDCs, and in this context, we will pursue equal-footed and flexible practices and initiatives for dialogue and cooperation with non-BRICS countries, including through BRICS Plus cooperation" (BRICS, 2017c).

<sup>65</sup> In his speech to the BRICS Business Forum in 2017 President Xi said: "We should promote the 'BRICS Plus' cooperation approach and build an open and diversified network of development partnerships to get more emerging market and developing countries involved in our concerted endeavors for cooperation and mutual benefits" (Xi, 2017).

would incorporate greater connectivity at the state level; its increased influence would offer greater pressure. However, BRICS itself may not be chosen as the executive platform for such broader participation. There are other institutions, such as the SCO, which may be used for these practical pursuits.

Whether a BRICS Plus takes shape beyond the present model waits to be seen. The recent inward turn by the US<sup>66</sup>, to unilateral nationalism instead of internationalism, may provide BRICS members and other aspiring states the chance to compete for influence, attracting affected states into its fold. Concurrently, it may increasingly prove that the US aggressively integrates a bloc around its own interests, employing its power and centrality to create an insider/outsider design, pressuring smaller states to pick one or the other. This may open to greater international competition, pressuring emerging states to not stand up against the might of the US, preventing the alternative regimes from centrally informing the global order.

This order constitutes itself; through the legal, the real is modified by the ideal. Significantly this is the case among BRICS. It is not the additional legal structural agreements that constitute the real. Instead, upon each state's legal authority, ideals build influence and legitimacy. The BRICS regime is, therefore, an informal, intergovernmental pressure group. BRICS Declarations do not present regime permanency. The timeline of its existence is directly apportioned to its achievement of aims; actualising greater regionalisation (multipolarity) and delegitimising global hegemony (unipolarity). Each Declaration reflects its first statement of resolve<sup>67</sup>, but each Declaration also dynamically evolves, to offer context to the ongoing present state of affairs.

## **BRICS: ETHOS AND LEADERSHIP**

BRICS' ethos is not the aggregation of individual countries, but that of the singular corporate regime. Through the exhibition of values and principles, BRICS shapes its ethos

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<sup>66</sup> Discussed on page 52.

<sup>67</sup> "We underline our support for a more democratic and just multi-polar world order based on the rule of international law, equality, mutual respect, cooperation, coordinated action and collective decision-making of all states" (BRICS, 2009).

in accordance to the authoritative UN multilateral international order. At its core is the active networking among independent states. From a study of its summit Declarations Freire (2018) discusses the common governance elements central to BRICS' embrace. These include: 1) the "promotion of a more inclusive, transparent and just international order, where wider representability in global governance institutions might be fostered through institutional reform processes"; and 2) respect for "noninterference in the internal affairs and respect for the territorial integrity of states" (Freire, 2018). These measures in effect propose the firmer application of UN guided norms and principles. This is seen by BRICS not having a foundational document of its own, instead methodically acceding to the authority of the UN Charter. The UN is conveyed as the ultimate arbiter of global legitimacy, it enjoys "universal membership and is at the centre of global governance and multilateralism" (BRICS, 2013c).

Though BRICS' formation takes shape outside of UN infrastructure, it very carefully does not dislocate from its authority. Its' very architecture, the legal organisation which allows its interdependence is conserved by the UN Charter and not through a mechanism of its own. BRICS is not a duplication of the UN; instead, it offers motion to its ethos and logos. It presents a scenario of functioning, reformed international order. BRICS' hybrid strategy seeks to favourably combine the liberal international system, under which member states have developed, to the conservative, sovereign system that it espouses as a group. This model of hybrid governance brings together state, interstate and everything in between, to favourably build an international consensus of mutual dependence and lessened domination (Stephen, 2014).

Leadership is central to BRICS. Its summit declarations exhibit and mimic the ethos and leadership of the UN realm, so to persuade its audience. It demonstrates a careful exhibition of an independent will to be interdependent; it moves through concord with opponents, not through aggravation. The key here is to articulate leadership and ethos that emerges from inside the legitimate order. BRICS' expression of loyalty through its commitments to the international system portrays the networked international identity. This is a favourable choice as research suggests that "good leadership depends on constituent cooperation and support" and "that to gain credibility among followers,

leaders must try to position themselves among the group rather than above it” (Reicher et al, 2007).

Ethos deals with appearance, not direct force; credibility stems from appearance more than actual arguments. States such as China, with its own interpretations of matters, such as human rights<sup>68</sup>, can, therefore, appear to advance the international consensus through the group. It does not persuade with a favourable result, but instead dynamically through the performance of values.

BRICS’ focus on ethos is clear from the way that it advances ideals without necessarily backing them up in deed. It does not pretend to be neutral. By aligning to the international order it desists being seen as an elitist project, as described by Taylor (2012) and suggested by Bond and Garcia (2015). The agency it adopts through its Declarations display a clear understanding: it implements its networked regime as an interpretation of the loose concepts of international order. Herein BRICS presents itself as a leadership regime, to bring about another modality of doing that which is already agreed upon.

Haslam et al’s (2011) definition of leadership closely corresponds to Nye’s soft power<sup>69</sup>: “leadership, for us, is not simply about getting people to do things. It is about getting them to want to do things. Leadership, then, is about shaping beliefs, desires, and priorities. It is about achieving influence, not securing compliance” (Haslam et al, 2011: xx). Shaping desires are central to BRICS, its rhetoric proclaims meaning, inspiring others to want what it wants, to support its promotion of international reform. Its leadership is therefore about attraction through setting a credible example. Leadership is self-regenerating (Haslam et al, 2011). BRICS independently shows how principles require national will and agency.

Leadership, as an art of influence, does not simply subscribe to certain norms. Through action and embodiment, leadership redefines norms. BRICS Declarations “define their group’s social identity to fit with the policies they plan to promote, enabling them to

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<sup>68</sup> Since 1991 China has released a number of White Papers on human rights. This is a territorialising initiative wherein it puts forward its own narrative on human rights.

<sup>69</sup> Detailed on page five.



position those policies as expressions of what” it already believes (Reicher et al, 2007). Its Declarations “allow the BRICS countries to emphasize their common desire to increase their collective voice in world affairs while sidestepping differences on specific issues” (Vabulas, 2014: 3). Its regime endorses leadership to be structurally exhibited.

The establishment of the NDB presents BRICS’ central instrumentalisation of leadership. The *NDB General Strategy 2017-2021* introduces a:

“21<sup>st</sup> century multilateral development bank that builds on the experiences of existing institutions”, but that also “act independently in matters of international economic governance and development”; the “creation of the Bank is an expression of the growing role of BRICS...in the world economy” (New Development Bank, 2017: 3).

The Bank seeks to inspire persuasion by breaking free and transforming financial dependence.

“NDB is the first development institution of global scope set up exclusively by emerging market countries with no participation of advanced economy countries in the initial stage. Its establishment reflects the rise of BRICS and other EMDCs in the past decades and a shared view that they can contribute to economic growth and sustainable development in a new way. The support shown by the founding member countries is a testament to their vision of creating a truly transformative development finance institution” (New Development Bank, 2017: 10).

The Bank is future-oriented, advancing a new, changed world that requires new financial modalities.

“The context for global development has changed dramatically in recent decades...New forms of development cooperation are needed to achieve these outcomes...(of being) a truly 21st-century multilateral development bank (MDB), one that makes use of the MDB’s proven core financial model, while designing and implementing systems, practices and an organizational

culture that can live up to the challenges and opportunities posed by the current global context (New Development Bank, 2017: 6).

Furthermore, the Strategy is a clear attempt to advance sovereign interdependence.

“Most importantly, NDB is committed to a new mindset of partnership with all members and borrowers, in the belief—based on founders’ own experiences—that projects will be most successful when borrowing countries are in charge of their own development path” (New Development Bank, 2017: 6).

Institutionalisation in BRICS’ hybrid strategy substantiates what Shelepov (2015) calls: BRICS’ second type of engagement. BRICS member states maintain their first approach, seeking inclusion in the world systems, such as the IMF and World Bank. This catalytic approach was exclusively pursued in BRICS’ formative years, aimed towards change from the inside. This remains its predominant position of "stimulating or supporting changes in and reforms of international organizations" (Shelepov, 2015: 8). In recent years BRICS has consolidated its leadership and ethos in a second, parallel approach. The development of institutions rebalances representation, which is "likely to speed up voice reform even in the established multilaterals" (Reisen, 2015: 88). This second, more direct soft balancing mode, has not become prevalent and instead is used to append the first. Too much broader institutionalisation would put at risk its neutral, insider advantage, from where it creates its fundamental indictments. The greater institutionalisation inside BRICS was not to launch forceful formations but to instil a cooperative archetype of multilateralism. These displays of partnership have formed BRICS as a network, deliberately communicating its desire for global reform.

## **BRICS: STIMULATING REFORM THROUGH LEGITIMATION AND DELEGITIMATION**

BRICS relations present the state-centric governance model it seeks. It sets out a soft balancing approach towards redefining international consensus. This drive for reform is

deliberated through its summit diplomacy<sup>70</sup>. Herein its decisions project a direct reflection of contemporary global governance failures. BRICS performs its narration so to dissuade and delegitimize, framing others as faulty. BRICS is affirmed out of these failures; it operates out of negative rationality: failure of the international financial institutions, failure of achieving UN reform, *etcetera*. It presents itself as a new formation, untainted by former behaviour. It legitimates itself, seeking influence while delegitimizing the forces responsible for the status quo.

To achieve reform through increased legitimacy, without political or legal force, is a strategically superior approach. The sovereign legitimacy of each state combines to form the legal foundation that BRICS uses to censure the illegal overreach of dominant countries and institutions, bequeathed with appended legality to ensure maintenance of authority. Against these institutions and their handlers BRICS pursue, in Burkean terms, *identification*. According to Kenneth Burke (1951) identification is a deliberate persuasive device, correlating the speaker's interest to that of the audience. It may also be an end: "people earnestly yearn to identify themselves with some group or another" (Burke, 1951: 203). Identification's significance emerges from shared, yet different, experiences. Were there no distinction, there would be no need to unite. BRICS as a shared vehicle for divergent members incorporates its regime under identification as positive and cooperative. Its progressive, developmental programme also allows for identification by other states. Identification allows the advantages of positive affinity and attraction, without needing the means to assume responsibility.

BRICS members' collective, reciprocal recognition of each other, allows for a credible and legitimate entity to egress. BRICS recognises itself, through positive interaction, as a composite formation, formed by its years of cooperation; advancing its influence, building forward. This pursuit is clearly expressed in the 2017 summit Declaration:

"We reiterate that it is the overarching objective and our desire for peace, security, development and cooperation that brought us together 10 years

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<sup>70</sup> "We remain concerned with the slow pace of the reform of the IMF" (BRICS, 2013c).

ago...Our cooperation since 2006 has fostered the BRICS spirit featuring mutual respect and understanding, equality, solidarity, openness, inclusiveness and mutually beneficial cooperation, which is our valuable asset and an inexhaustible source of strength for BRICS cooperation. We have shown respect for the development paths of our respective choices, and rendered understanding and support to each other's interests. We have upheld equality and solidarity. We have also embraced openness and inclusiveness, dedicated to forging an open world economy. We have furthered our cooperation with emerging markets and developing countries (EMDCs). We have worked together for mutually beneficial outcomes and common development, constantly deepening BRICS practical cooperation which benefits the world at large" (BRICS, 2017c).

BRICS' espousal of norms and principles carefully soft balances hegemonic control. Stuenkel suggests that American "dominance over system-shaping ideas remains very strong" and that "any anti-hegemonic alliance" that wishes to make an impact needs to have a solid "intellectual foundation" (Stuenkel, 2015: 157). BRICS legitimization takes place through its affirmation of UN dominion. Every BRICS summit Declaration offers "strong commitment" to the UN playing a "central role" in multilateral diplomacy, international peace, and security. The UN Charter is used to censure abusive powers, while the organisation's consented to, but unexecuted reform<sup>71</sup>, signals proof of improper function. BRICS capitalises on this deficiency by insisting on returning the world to a fluid, balance of forces; away from hegemonic dominance, to a "multipolar, equitable and democratic world order, based on international law, equality, mutual respect, cooperation, coordinated action and collective decision-making of all States" (BRIC, 2010).

BRICS' hybrid strategy moves it from what is towards what should be. As G20 insiders, BRICS states operate in a formative and affirmative manner. Several of its calls are lifted verbatim from G20 summit Declarations. Its overt support for the G20<sup>72</sup> is clearly

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<sup>71</sup> Discussed on page 58.

<sup>72</sup> Every BRICS Declaration but 2009 and 2013 call the G20 the "premier forum" for international financial and economic cooperation.

contrasted to it functioning as a counterpart to the G7; both groups' members are also members of the G20. The continued existence of the G7 has opened the space for an alternate body to synthesise its relations with the G20. Were the G7 to cease following the launch of the expanded G20 in 2008, BRICS' claim to relevancy and legitimacy would have been much weaker. BRICS strategically responded to continued G7 existence following the G20's first expanded leaders' summit in 2009 by launching its own leaders' summit. It has moulded into a G7-like regime.

BRICS' structure occupies similar form and ways to that of the G7: an informal forum, with no headquarters or secretariat and a rotating Presidency, empowered to lead yearly proceedings and drafting the yearly summit Declarations. It has designated national representatives or Sherpas and Sous-Sherpas that configure its mechanisms. It is structured hierarchically, from the national leader down, steered by ministerial meetings and executed upon by the working groups formulated at official gatherings. These hold great gravitas, setting the course for multilateral interaction. These plenary are more exemplary than substantial, performing an equal, cooperative framework of exchange. Where the G7 advances external international institutions to constructively support national systems<sup>73</sup>, BRICS advances the centrality of the state. The G20 forms the greater, overlapping forum between G7 and BRICS, an aggregated meeting place for all members of the triad (Rewizorski, 2015).

Though BRICS has the "potential to challenge the G7 in the coming decades" (Mostafa and Mahmood, 2015: 166), it is its narrative that forms a claim for common ground, as an alternative to the G7, not a direct challenge. Instead, it strategically operates alongside the G7, manifesting itself as legitimate. Where the G7 represents the apex regime of select developed countries, BRICS presents itself as a burgeoning example for emerging states advancing independent, cooperative development.

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<sup>73</sup> "we strongly support reforms underway in the affected countries and welcome the progress so far achieved. With full implementation of programmes agreed with the IMF we are confident that stability can be restored" (G8, 1998).

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL NETWORKS

The realisation of BRICS' processes of organisation forms part of the international networked order. The BRICS regime extends upon sovereignty, as right and recognition of independent agency, through its willing, sovereign collaboration. This allows "governments to accomplish through cooperation...what they could once only hope to accomplish acting alone within a defined territory" (Slaughter, 2004: 285), or through coercive alliances. Herein global governance as separation is replaced by cooperation. Networked sovereignty, therefore, transcends the right to be left alone, to emphasise a capacity to interact. The focal sphere of sovereignty evolves from legitimacy of authority domestically, to a global focus where countries are the legitimate actors of authority externally, amongst each other. It is through, not by, international organisations and agreements that engagement among countries transcend the outer projections of each other and come to shape their relations. A greater level of interaction does not have the effect of weakening sovereignty. Instead, the deeper the state's relations with others the more consolidated its position, the greater the state's power of independence (Slaughter, 2004: 286). Independence therefore contradictorily is not advanced by being left alone, but rather from concession, enmeshed together in networks. Through their reciprocation in global networks independent "government institutions would affirm their judicial, legislative, or regulatory sovereignty" (Slaughter, 2004: 326).

In an earlier formulation Slaughter (1997) calls the new emerging order transgovernmental: "The state is not disappearing; it is disaggregating into its separate, functionally distinct parts. These parts - courts, regulatory agencies, executives, and even legislatures - are networking with their counterparts abroad, creating a dense web of relations" (Slaughter, 1997). Beyond these interactions BRICS pursues a state-centric approach. Intergovernmental, instead of transgovernmental, will therefore be employed here.

BRICS forms an informal intergovernmental regime, a networking platform for sovereigns. States develop such organisations in order to preserve their sovereignty. BRICS' informal nature allows the pursuit of shared goals without being charged with responsibility, avoiding internationally binding agreements (Vabulas, 2014). BRICS as such

advances the legitimacy and credibility of informal organisations, while opposing formal ones which transfer power from the state into an external construct. BRICS' success could well depend on whether it is able to achieve greater recognition and legitimacy for informal organisations. The decline of formal organisations would ensue in powerful Western infrastructure increasingly being manipulated and ruptured. The sustained and recently increased pressure from the US on NATO states to pay its agreed financial contributions (Nix and Capaccio, 2018) presents a clear example of such manipulations and cleavages. Increased pressure, of states pursuing first their interests through state-centric mechanisms, could see a major shift in international politics, a tipping point where informal IGOs are preferred to formal ones (Vabulas, 2014).

BRICS' networked approach persuades by presenting open relations, based on a country by country approach. There is no central power; there is no core to determine the lot of the periphery. BRICS oppose alliances. Instead, it says "we support the 'Alliance of Civilizations', a United Nations initiative aimed at building bridges, mutual knowledge and understanding around the world" (BRICS, 2010). This explains Li and Agustín (2014) leads to interdependent hegemony: "the rise of the BRICS has indeed, to a large extent, challenged many aspects of the existing international order's functionality, scope, legitimacy and authority...However, it has not yet fundamentally changed the structural power of the existing international system" (Li and Agustín, in Kirton, 2014: 69).

States not only interact in networks of identity, but also in networks for identity. Agreements and Statements facilitate norms and identity within the collective. Communities arise around shared ideas. The basis of the BRICS partnership is inclusivity. To advance comprehensive reform, while avoiding zero-sum games, it requires a consolidated effort. Such international cooperation opposes a purely competitive us/them or core/periphery dichotomy. It perceives and embraces the network as the contemporary base of a global society, replacing hierarchies internationally.

The result is not world government, but global governance (Slaughter, 1997). The network society breeds network governance – governments still pursue their national interests, but they do this interactively, sharing information and working together on issues such as terrorism, the environment, and trade. Networked governance emboldens

the state by disaggregated functionality, with parts associating with their equals from other states. Intergovernmentalism is embraced through BRICS working groups and ministerial meetings, approved and launched through Declarations. BRICS is a testament that civilisational or cultural similarity is not a prerequisite for partnership. Instead, in networks trust and common enterprise is built upon willingness and reciprocity (Slaughter, 1997). Evolving summit Declarations play an integral role in building as well as checking progress and internal confidence. As they are also consensually legitimated, they are ideal for advancing commonality<sup>74</sup>.

## **BRICS DECLARATIONS: TOOLS OF SUMMIT DIPLOMACY**

BRICS employs dedicated *summit diplomacy*, utilising the highest national display of sovereignty to declare, through its combined gravitas, the consensus it has formed. The summit is an elevated moment of exhibition and performance; the leaders stamp their approval upon the evolving list of common pursuit, prepared by the hosting state, six to eight weeks in advance (Barnard, 2017). The summit Declaration is the central means of rhetorical invention for BRICS, presenting its argument to the world and its publics. Its position on the desired state of affairs artfully emerges from the documents, disguising its tactical points under a diplomatic cloak supporting positive vis-à-vis negative change. Declarations are carefully orchestrated and have largely maintained the same structure and perspective while expanding in scope and content.

BRICS Declarations instructively establish a dichotomous distinction between what should and what should not be the case. The Declaration works in tandem with all other protocol, to build trust and evince displays of reciprocal benefit. Summits are leadership exhibitions of great educational value. While being carefully scripted, rehearsed and compiled, direct and multilateral exchanges construct meaning through intentional displays to each other, their publics and the world at large. The mediated accessibility that summits impart emboldens the increasing agency of publics. These auspicious occasions are of great newsworthiness; states recognise the public diplomacy value underlying the

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<sup>74</sup> “We...encourage BRICS countries to engage in cultural exchanges and mutual learning to cultivate common values on the basis of diversity and sharing” (BRICS, 2017c).



summit (Melissen, 2003: 13). Every effort is taken to put a positive spin and tint on the story and image, respectively. The chairing country leads with great pomp. While equally important, the visiting leaders accord with great decorum, presenting a total image of grandeur, trust and reciprocity. The limited time available brings central matters to a head; talking points and ready-made sound bites are cardinal for success.

Declarations are also displays committing authority; they signify the functioning of BRICS. Though states may diverge, may change domestically under new leadership, membership in BRICS will do little to affect internal dynamics in individual countries. BRICS membership is strategic and substantial to the national interest, not the optics or bases of particular leaders. BRICS, through its Declarations, do not form a closed identity. It instead aims to foster global ideas. Citizens of BRICS countries are therefore not guided to essentially think of selves as BRICS citizens, in the manner Belgians are invoked to regard themselves European under the European Union; at least not yet.

Instead, its didactic position assumes a global identity, addressing a total audience, with comprehensive global interests. BRICS emerged as a grouping through summit diplomacy and has retained this instrumentality throughout its existence. From here it claims its significance and power. The commencement of the BRICS summit follows summitry becoming a core component of international relations in the mediatised era. BRICS exploits the attention it receives around the summit to display its core principles and values. The optics is carefully managed. Each year's summit produces a 'family photo' of the leaders; usually they are presented holding hands, smiling for the world to see their friendship and unity. The function of the summit is to draw attention, to present BRICS as a formidable feature in international affairs. The attendance of all national leaders, as has been the case throughout all summits, is a serious validation stamped upon the proceedings and the final Declaration. Their presence suggests the meeting to be of great importance; the Declarations declare a direct mandate.

The summit Declaration is furthermore a tool to display longevity. BRICS' first summit in 2009 indicated its intentions to develop. It was never going to be once off. Its declaration acknowledges and thanks the next year's host. This practice has continued every year, with each Declaration indicating continuation. BRICS is also future-oriented,

setting itself up to promote dialogue and cooperation “in an incremental, proactive, pragmatic, open and transparent way” (BRICS, 2009).

BRICS’ simulation of the G7, by meeting in a similar format, forms part of its broader soft balancing strategy. Soft balancing is core to BRICS strategy of latent multi-institutionalism, of using its access to buffer against power. It does not seek to coalesce, nor does it wish to aggregate or align its individual positions. Instead, through soft balancing BRICS states subvert the status quo by cooperating, surreptitiously presenting itself as powerful through its summit diplomacy<sup>75</sup>. These are expressions of its networked form. While most of the summit takes place behind closed doors, the assembled articulation of self is promoted through the Declaration.

The summit Declarations provide BRICS with the functional tool to advance its shared policy ends “through the establishment of mechanisms of coordination and cooperation...with a view to optimising collective outcomes” (Tudoroiu, 2012: 28). The summit is a leading expression towards reform; engaging independently it establishes what Russian President Dmitry Medvedev called “conditions for a more just world order” (Stuenkel, 2015: 17).

As the G7 Declaration does, BRICS’ version commences: “we, the leaders”. This positive affirmation presents BRICS as a purposed and authorised regime. Following its consistent expression of unity, each Declaration systematically affirms the choice of acronymic identity by listing the official names of member states, so to claim and affirm its legitimacy and leadership.

The group’s resolve is affixed by the subsequent proclamation of summit theme. Commencing in 2012 the summit theme allows divergent nations to channel their perceptions and volitions, to present the wholeness. It averts miscommunication, which in such a format and with limited meeting time, could easily occur. At the BRICS summit the “rotating host will definitely influence the substance as they will formulate the theme and

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<sup>75</sup> Flesmes (2013) proposes that countries entangle diplomatically, seeking influence by “the use of rules and procedures of international institutions...In addition, rising powers use global governance institutions and summits to build new coalitions and networks for the pursuit of common interests” (Flesmes, 2013: 1020).

summit outcomes; also the structure to a certain extent, but the issues are relatively standardised by now” (Barnard, 2017). Though the host crafts the wording of the theme, the substance from which it stems has been crystallised under the values and maxims distilling BRICS signification. The theme is a rhetorical tool that instils purpose. It is greatly informative of how BRICS constructs and seeks identification. In more than half the cases BRICS presents itself as a “partnership”: “for Global Stability, Security and Prosperity” (2012), “for Development, Integration and Industrialisation” (2013), “a Powerful Factor of Global Development” (2015), “for a Brighter Future” (2017). The centrality of “partnership” averts the incongruity of member states; it suggests equality and affirms BRICS as cooperative, not bound in an alliance.

The other two summit themes imply a comprehensive relationship by using the word “inclusive”: “Inclusive Growth: Sustainable Solutions” (2014), and “Building Responsive, Inclusive and Collective Solutions” (2016). In all of the themes, there are clear intentions to actively be part of improved global governance. Their pledge to “solutions” presents a claim to deal with global conditions. Yet, strategically their modes remain nondescript, if not simply suggestive. Their programme is clearly to adjudicate, not execute. Summits drive a multilateral being-as-process; their themes assist this orientation, to become through presentation. Instead of a fixed organisational structure, through treaty or otherwise, the themes and summits present and perform a normative demonstration of global governance. The themes present a broad range of strategic concepts<sup>76</sup> through supporting adjectives<sup>77</sup>, intimating preferable outcomes<sup>78</sup>, but offering little detail. Over the years its rhetoric of values has expressed a consistent push towards greater legalistic and moralistic international relations.

The theme compactly articulates the overarching focus of the summit, holding the leadership on point. It also reads as a headline would. It is short, conveys action and promises benefit through appealing concepts. The rest of the Declaration, “a masterpiece

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<sup>76</sup> The theme in 2012: “BRICS Partnership for Global Stability, Security and Prosperity”.

<sup>77</sup> The theme in 2014: “Inclusive Growth; Sustainable Solutions”.

<sup>78</sup> The theme in 2016: “Building Responsive, Inclusive and Collective Solutions”.

in the art of compromise” (Melissen, 2003: 3), formally pronounces on the principles and projects that bind the member states together and which drive the regime forward. Summits and their Declarations are not only displays of coherence, but through active diplomacy also produce the regime, without implicating a specific country. Foremost members are not beneficent, the articulated arguments provide indirectly for further implementation of individual national strategies. The oblique formulations of regime can also allow the pursuit of a totally different strategy to that of individual countries, without necessarily deviating goals.

BRICS’ actions and interactions affirm it as a realist, strategic regime. Member states benefit from a synergistic relationship, crafted for purpose. Tudoroiu makes a significant point here. The author states that BRICS present its:

“democratic and just stand only within the regime, i.e. with regard to each other and their joint actions undertaken in the BRICS framework. Most likely, the Kremlin will continue to bully Tbilisi. But at the same time it will act within G20 to increase the weight of emerging and developing countries, Georgia included. This might seem cynical, but it is a realistic, effective strategy that is qualitatively different from that followed by the non-aligned movement after Bandung” (Tudoroiu, 2012: 38).

Declarations execute the basis of the system that BRICS members wish to realise; advocating their form as best practice. Pragmatism, opportunism and commonality are central to pressure groups attaining influence and consolidating legitimacy. Further tactics have been employed to advance BRICS’ strategy of consolidating its legitimacy. Personal pronouns constitute a powerful factor in rhetorical persuasion and identification. Throughout its Declarations BRICS invariably refer to the group as ‘we’. It prefaces its supporting claims with “we reaffirm”, “we commend”, “we call”, “we support”, etcetera. Hereby it conveys support, without admitting ownership towards change. Its expression emerges from a united position, avoiding directly attributable responsibility to single parties. ‘We’ also declares active engagement and utility. BRICS Declarations build a

positive impression of reform; each of the 48 times *reform* is mentioned<sup>79</sup> it is in relation to the improved execution of global governance, the achievement of international representativeness.

BRICS regularly expresses its “concern” with international developments, invariably advancing an international solution centred in principles<sup>80</sup>. Sinha and Dorschner (2010) dismiss BRICS’ lack of institutionalism, arguing that compiling a Declaration is “a paper exercise similar to the Non-Aligned Movement that will prove heavy on rhetorical flourish but unlikely to significantly change the unipolar status quo” (Sinha and Dorschner, 2010: 88). This argument, while compelling, misses BRICS’ considerable and attuned summit diplomacy. BRICS summit Declarations allow informative discernment of contemporary global issues. They play the significant performance of embodying the reform that BRICS wishes to achieve through a soft balancing approach.

## **BRICS DECLARATIONS AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE**

### **i) CONTEXTUALISING BRICS’ DECLARATIONS**

Summit Declarations expound BRICS’ version of global governance as an arrangement of geopolitical interdependence, based on strategic transactions among states, vis-à-vis institutions. In 2011 BRICS underwrote this intergovernmental pursuit by identifying its vision for global governance:

“We share the view that the world is undergoing far-reaching, complex and profound changes, marked by the strengthening of multipolarity, economic globalization and increasing interdependence. While facing the evolving global environment and a multitude of global threats and challenges, the international community should join hands to strengthen cooperation for common development” (BRICS, 2011c).

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<sup>79</sup> BRICS summit Declarations 2009-2017.

<sup>80</sup> “We are deeply concerned by the situation in Iraq. We strongly support the Iraqi government in its effort to overcome the crisis, uphold national sovereignty and territorial integrity” (BRICS, 2014c).

Under the provision of “universally recognized norms and international law and in a spirit of mutual respect and collective decision making”, it said that global governance “should be strengthened, democracy in international relations should be promoted, and the voice of emerging and developing countries in international affairs should be enhanced” (BRICS, 2011c). The drive for global governance to be a collective and comprehensive enterprise not only advances the agency of countries that have historically been excluded, thereby ensuring democratic engagement, but also essentially returns agency back to the sphere of the state. BRICS’ aim is for an enterprise in an intergovernmental network, “marked by the strengthening of multipolarity, economic globalization and increasing interdependence” (BRICS, 2011c).

Declarations build a common directive to align governance to the values and principles it expounds<sup>81</sup>. Cooperation lies at the heart of BRICS’ Declarations; cooperation is by far the most used word throughout<sup>82</sup>. Furthermore, openness is characteristic of this pursuit. BRICS stresses that its interactions and all international relations should be open, to ensure collaboration, but also to avoid domination. Openness is also invoked by BRICS Declarations as essential to the behaviour of international institutions. Openness allows states to cooperate in their collective interest. Slaughter (2004) provides a compelling understanding of how BRICS might regard cooperative or relational sovereignty. While the author writes before BRICS’ formation, she discusses the conditions from where BRICS emerges:

“If sovereignty were still understood as exclusive and impermeable rather than relational, strengthening the state would mean building higher walls to protect its domestic autonomy. But in a world in which sovereignty means the capacity to participate in cooperative regimes in the collective interest of all states, expanding the formal capacity of different state institutions to interact with their counterparts around the world means expanding state power” (Slaughter, 2004: 327).

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<sup>81</sup> Detailed in chapter three.

<sup>82</sup> The number of times cooperation is mentioned: 2009: 8; 2010: 19; 2011: 29; 2012: 19; 2013: 19; 2014: 56; 2015: 101; 2016: 56; 2017: 119.

Given that all BRICS states are members of authoritative bodies, especially the G20, it can employ its Declarations to influence the modalities of these platforms in its favour. It commits its shared voice to the “central role played by the G20 Summits in dealing with the financial crisis” (BRIC, 2009). Herein the 2009 BRICS summit can already be seen more as an intergovernmental forum, with this Declaration an affirmative call to action. This document takes a multilateral, inclusive and future orientation. It places BRICS in a leadership position by advancing the same calls as the G20, affirming that a “global crisis requires a global solution” (G20, 2009). BRICS as global governance forum is advanced by the G20’s determination to “reform and modernize the international financial institutions...we will reform their mandates, scope and governance to reflect the changes in the world economy...and that emerging and developing economies, including the poorest must have greater voice and representation” (G20, 2009). G20 resolve for change in global governance opens the door for BRICS. Central to BRICS’ operational purpose is to prompt the activation of reform that has already been committed to<sup>83</sup>. It amplifies the G20’s pledged reform<sup>84</sup> through reiteration; holding it to account, advancing the activation of its commitment.

BRICS’ inception at the formation of the G20 suggests that its states had little faith in the ability of the G20 to effect reform, alone. BRICS bandwagons upon the G20, functioning as an advocacy group. Hereby it avoids confrontation and liability. Instead of introducing new content, BRICS identifies with it, using its Declarations to call for its execution, while maintaining a loose, disaggregated relationship. Instead of inserting itself as an instrumental agent, it craftily comments on its performance. One tactic is to motion towards appropriate, norm-based behaviour through the construction of its own, separate narrative. This is done to remind others of their commitments, advocating for suitable realisation. For example, it lifts directly from the G20: saying that international financial institution leadership “should be appointed through an open, transparent, and merit-

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<sup>83</sup> “We call upon all states and relevant international bodies to act vigorously to implement the decisions adopted at the G20 Summit in London on 2 April, 2009” (BRIC, 2009).

<sup>84</sup> “advancing the reform of the Bretton Woods Institutions so that they can more adequately reflect changing economic weights in the world economy in order to increase their legitimacy and effectiveness” (G20, 2008).

based selection process” (G20, 2009; BRICS, 2009). Copying this central point, iterated yearly in subsequent Declarations, does not challenge but prompts the G20 into action. In so doing it does not only seek identification but employs identification rhetorically.

BRICS’ first priority mentioned in its 2010 Declaration is that global governance needs to change with the world. To achieve this end the G20 must accomplish its resolutions. It pushes G20 “member states to undertake further efforts to implement jointly the decisions adopted at the three G-20 Summits...to be proactive and formulate a coherent strategy for the post-crisis period” (BRICS, 2010). In so doing it constitutes the G20 as the premier economic forum, soft balancing the powers and interests of the G7.

BRICS affords rhetorical motion to the G20’s active implementation of its programmes, propounding that the G20 “remains a critical factor for strengthening the prospects for a vigorous and sustainable recovery worldwide”; charging it to play “a bigger role in global governance” (BRICS, 2014c; BRICS, 2011c). It advances multilateralism by suggesting each country accepts individual responsibility for itself in the broader collective. Its stress on sovereign equality furthers equivalence of emerged and emerging countries, securing bi-valence and relative power; “(W)e stand ready to work with others, developed and developing countries together, on the basis of universally recognised norms of international law and multilateral decision making” (BRICS, 2012b). Working within this legal structure BRICS insists upon corrective measures to global governance<sup>85</sup>. The improvement of developing countries is consistently presented through the modus of UN programmes and institutions, so to not absorb responsibility, but to promote legitimacy. In every Declaration it gives substance to its call for openness by urging the international community to successfully and comprehensively conclude the Doha Development Round of the WTO. This tactic not only advocates the improved agency of developing (vis-à-vis developed) countries in international trading but maintains the order under which BRICS countries have flourished.

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<sup>85</sup> “Reforming these institutions’ governance structures requires first and foremost a substantial shift in voting power in favor of emerging market economies and developing countries to bring their participation in decision making in line with their relative weight in the world economy” (BRICS, 2010).



More specifically, in every Declaration, it calls upon every country to take independent action in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and subsequently the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)<sup>86</sup>. The agency for fulfilment greatly lies with the developed countries, with developing countries as recipients. BRICS further lays responsibility at the door of developed countries by pressing for their funding commitment of 0.7% of gross national income as recognised in 1970 by UNGA Resolution 2626<sup>87</sup>. BRICS has also taken to partnering with authorities such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) to form the UNIDO-BRICS Technology Platform in 2016. This cooperation forms a pioneering and authorising venture for BRICS to tangibly collaborate in existing infrastructures; to develop partnerships and gain recognition.

The growth of the Declaration develops the regime, impressing with increased validity and success. It matures the ethos through building a historical foundation; Declarations give direction to past and future engagements. Herein BRICS has laboured not to succumb to its own critique of non-compliance. According to University of Toronto's *BRICS Information Centre*, BRICS has improved upon its already high compliance rate of political commitments, achieving 78% for 2015, up from 64% in 2012 and 70% in 2014. (Larionova et al, 2015). Success is a potent tactic towards legitimacy. The 2013 Declaration stated: "We consider that the next Director-General of the WTO should be a representative of a developing country" (BRICS, 2013c). This goal was achieved a few months later when the Brazilian Roberto Azevêdo was appointed its new director.

The reform of the international governance institutions and the increased capacity of emerging and developing states are central in every BRICS Declaration. BRICS stresses that international governance structures do not accommodate contemporary power

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<sup>86</sup> The Millennium Development Goals were adopted at the Millennium Summit of the UN in 2000. It established eight development goals, to be achieved by 2015. The subsequent Sustainable Development Goals were adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in 2015. It combines a comprehensive call to eliminate global poverty, ensure climate protection as well as human security into 17 delineated goals.

<sup>87</sup> "Each economically advanced country will progressively increase its official development assistance to the developing countries and will exert its best efforts to reach a minimum net amount of 0.7% of its gross national product" (United Nations, 1970).

distribution, hereby expanding upon the NIEO. BRICS closely imitates the NIEO's claim for "equity, sovereign equality, interdependence, common interest and cooperation among all states"; that "irreversible changes in the relationship of forces in the world necessitate the active, full and equal participation of the developing countries" (United Nations, 1974).

In furthering these claims it develops a modern articulation for the advance of developing countries in global governance. As such it transcends and replaces the de facto defunct NAM and the G77. By not mentioning the former, the latter only once, congratulating it on its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2014, BRICS transcends these historical regimes. Dissimilar in its mandate BRICS adopts a comprehensive position on global governance. It expounds equality as an outcome of its approach to relational states, standing up against powerful states to persuade of political equivalence. It thereby seeks the favour from weaker states, while substantiating its challenge to the powerful.

## **ii) STATE-CENTRISM**

The locus of BRICS' persuasion and identification is invariably the network of separate states. Throughout its Declarations its commitment remains to a "solid legal basis" and to the "democratic and transparent decision-making and implementation" by individual states (BRIC, 2009). This distinction advances the state as the unit of power in a complex, multilateral order, where there are many poles. This is in contradiction to the core/periphery universalism, where there is a singular pole. State-centrism is a core component of neo-realist international relations, which views states as the regulative containers of their society; power is territorially circumscribed (Lacher, 2003: 521). State-centrism opposes what it sees as the infiltrating forces of singular universalism, where the opening up of nationally bound territories sees forces interacting with local societies, interfering in the authority and affairs of local power structures. Proponents of state-centrism are concerned with universalising systems which are unaccountable and beyond the territorial reach of local authorities. BRICS propounds state-led globalisation. It claims

that universalising processes have created instabilities in the national power nexus; they have returned power to the national realm, often to a political strongman<sup>88</sup>.

A significant modality BRICS employs to advance state-centrism are partnerships between state organisations; it stresses “the important role that State Owned Companies (SOCs) play in the economy” (BRICS, 2013c). These organisations make up the majority of its engagements and aim to circumscribe the freedom and power that international capital holds. This expanded cooperation manifestly returns agency, from externally organised, to circumscribed by the state. “The central position that state controlled banks and sovereign wealth funds take in the BRICS model of development”, says Duggan (2015), “also challenges the current system of global governance by reducing the influence of private capital in the global marketplace” (Duggan, 2015: 21). This commonality of state-centric capitalism, across the BRICS states, is an evident reason for its partnership; a supporting rationale for its specific membership.

BRICS engages the national agencies of member states to construct state-led alternative or complementary institutions, breaking the pre-eminence of external bodies. In 2016 BRICS started to explore “the possibility of setting up an independent BRICS Rating Agency based on market-oriented principles to further strengthen global governance architecture” (BRICS, 2016c). The NDB is the clearest example “to cooperate closely with existing and new financing mechanisms” (BRICS, 2015a) and which aims to contribute “greatly to the global economy and the strengthening of the international financial architecture” (BRICS, 2016c). Organisations such as NDB do not present international platforms to accede to the functions of the state, nor do they directly oppose international institutions. The NDB is explicitly purposed to “mobilize resources...complementing the existing efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global growth and development” (BRICS, 2014a).

The NDB is purposed to impress with best practice, suggesting that the capacity of “BRICS economies to better deal with the risks”, provide “sound macroeconomic policies,

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<sup>88</sup> China (Xi Jinping), India (Narendra Modi), South Africa (Jacob Zuma) and Russia (Vladimir Putin) have all seen considerable power consolidation in an individual leader in the recent past.

efficiently regulated markets and robust levels of reserves” (BRICS, 2015a). It is expressly set up to be “based on sound banking principles” (BRICS, 2014a). It provides BRICS with the opportunity of not having to rely on external institutions and players; in the future it plans to trade in local currencies, empowering member states, thereby opposing the might of the US Dollar. These indications point toward future global resolve that promotes extra-Western solutions. While BRICS avoids direct authority over developing states, it aspires to give global direction. Instead of outsourcing governance to Bretton Woods and other institutions that are nominally neutral, but have been historically dominated by Western countries<sup>89</sup>, BRICS advances cooperative governance intergovernmentally. BRICS’ support for state-led growth and state-driven development-banks present a direct and consequential response to the dominance of the Washington Consensus (Stuenkel, 2013).

This democratic approach expands the focal sphere of sovereignty from the legitimacy of authority internally in a country to a global focus where countries are nodes of legitimacy, amongst each other. It maintains authority over multi-track diplomacy and relations, incorporated into networked intergovernmentalism. It presents a shift from governance, centred on administration and control (management) to greater transactional interdependence. Such governance, steered by international principles, is the work of leadership and negotiation. It represents a contemporary neo-mercantilism that is executed by sovereign states, not external, mandated institutions. The reciprocating, yet unilateral economic nationalist policies of the Trump administration in the US suggest that it is not only BRICS moving in this direction.

BRICS states prefer networking in this state-centric design over which it holds central power. BRICS’ strategy can be seen in Cooper and Momani (2014): “As new centers of power mobilize and old institutions fall behind the curve of change, the trend in world politics has been for countries to substitute, bypass, or marginalize established institutions of global governance in favor of engagement with new forms of cooperative institutional arrangements - in short, toward informality in global governance” (Cooper and Momani, 2014: 213).

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<sup>89</sup> Leaders from the World Bank and IMF consistently hail from the US and Europe, respectively.

The BRICS rhetorical strategy returns the state to the centre of global governance. Since the 2014 Declaration the words “mutually beneficial” have often been appended when the word “cooperation” is mentioned. It does so to avert the fears of traditional, combative mercantilism. It advances transactional nation-to-nation relationships that contradict the neo-liberal tiered relationships which opens the domestic space to external agency. Instead of forcing terms upon weaker states, the transactional model is presented as less coercive. BRICS’ intergovernmentalism executes state control, instead of arbitrary domination that emerges from a core/periphery model.

Instead of being forced to accept terms, states persuade each other and conclude deals. This transactional model poses a great advantage for durable states to pursue their own strategic interests. Success in this model greatly depends on the domestic stability of states. One party will endeavour to secure its autonomy while pursuing to undermine that of the others’. True independence, as discussed in chapter two, is of primary importance. In the domain of transactional relations IW and the influence of foreign domestic publics, as opposed to traditional state-to-state battlefields, will increasingly be the order of the day.

Intergovernmentalism, however, also poses volatility where states are not the designers and arbiters of their power and are vulnerable to influence in their internal affairs; not only by organisations but by other states directly. What this model of engagement effectively does is separate political formations that are independent and strategically capable to those that are not. It removes inevitability and permanency and returns the world to a state of geopolitical flux, opening to interference. Bond (2014) warns that despite BRICS’ potential for anti-imperialism, to ameliorate inequitable and abusive international relations, it has been showing inter-imperialist and “sub-imperialist” tendencies (Bond, 2014).

Universality, as exhibited through BRICS reform, affirms separation in a distinctly non-tiered, networked, nodal order. Hereby states are constrained to conform in common but differentiated responsibility. Simply, this entails a removal of automatic privileges of association and alliance. Instead of immutable relations, states return to their traditional islands of power in a balance of forces. This realist projection sees states pitted in

transactionalism. They are equally distinct, to succeed or fail by their own enterprise. The retreat of a centralising or universalising force ensures sovereign differentiation, which removes any automatic independence. Instead, independence has to actively and individually be fought for and claimed.

This furthermore transcends a system of tiered governance; disambiguating developing/developed or South/North countries to units of a global whole, privy to the same guidelines. This is not utopian; political independence does not incur economic equivalence. Rather, central to BRICS' global governance is the application of universal obligations, diminishing privilege divides between countries. This allows the shoring up of power for states presently excluded by overly concentrated power dynamics. BRICS seeks the territory for those, such as its member states, which are willing and able to claim their independence, to exert influence in their region and globally. While BRICS motions for the right of sovereigns to claim autonomy and territory, it is no handout or nurturing project. It seeks to provide the conditions for the global cake to be cut up again, by no means providing special treatment to anyone; this approach is antithetical to developmental aid.

BRICS' state-centrism underpins its pursuit of reform. Following its formative years (2009-2011), where BRICS established its global geopolitical gravitas, 2012 saw the escalation of its declarative indictment of global governance. Its increased discernment of the international system sees roughly the same number of points, 35, relating to global governance, as previous Declarations consisted of in total. Each point perceives an aspect of the international system, either to be cherished or reformed. This focus is maintained or increased subsequently. In 2012 BRICS transcended its earlier comment on international affairs only in context to its own association<sup>90</sup> to express concern of select international situations and to exact judgment procedurally<sup>91</sup>. BRICS' strategy is advanced when it tactically declares that "global interests" are best "served by dealing with the crisis through peaceful means that encourage broad national dialogues that reflect the legitimate aspirations of all sections of Syrian society and respect Syrian independence,

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<sup>90</sup> For example: "we wish to continue our cooperation in the UN Security Council on Libya" (BRICS, 2011c).

<sup>91</sup> For example: "We express our deep concern at the current situation in Syria and call for an immediate end to all violence and violations of human rights in that country" (BRICS, 2012b).

territorial integrity and sovereignty” (BRICS, 2012b). This advance is clearly precipitated by the previous year’s UNSC Resolution 1973, the first-ever approval to use force against a sovereign state, Libya.

This approval was the direct application of the previously abstract concept of *Responsibility to Protect*<sup>92</sup> (R2P) (Stuenkel, 2015: 40). The ambiguity in the interpretation of legitimacy in international law, expressed here, further exposes its incoherency. The US-led adjudication that Libya’s regime had lost political legitimacy led directly to the UN, through its Security Council, determining the Libyan state to have lost legal legitimacy. This precedent exposes the complicated implication of the international norm-based authority transcending its core sovereign-diplomatic sanctity by condoning coercion. The perceived insecurity created through these tangible changes presents the international regime as insecure, open to influence. It is from the loss of this normative sanctity that BRICS have coalesced, warning of instability and developments in international relations; change begetting more change. Seeking to exploit the opportunities opened by Western imposition BRICS deliberately opposes aggression. Stuenkel suggests that “rather than developing a new international norm, the propagation of R2P represents the absence of international political consensus and the failure of Western leadership” (Stuenkel, 2015: 46). In this space, BRICS advances its legitimacy and intergovernmental regime. It endeavours to take advantage where international law has been neglected. These actions take place in light of power having shifted to international institutions, which have forced states to align to them (for example the WTO) (Thomas, 2013: 3). This convolution is illustrated by BRICS member states, in fact, supporting R2P on various occasions, whether out of principle or simply ensuring that it is not seen as renegades (Stuenkel, 2015: 130).

In order to stress the centrality of states, BRICS Declarations emphasise that UN-sanctioned protocol play integral consolidation roles; they provide platforms for interaction and cooperation and offer clear guidelines to the states as relational agents. A significant example that features in seven out of eight Declarations is an acknowledgement of the *Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism*. BRICS

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<sup>92</sup> “The Responsibility to Protect doctrine is the enabling principle that first obligates individual states and then the international community to protect populations” (UNRIC, 2018).

systematically “call upon all nations to work together to expedite the adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism” (BRICS, 2016c). International ratification of such a convention will judicially draw clear lines to guide behaviour, limiting the dominant forces to authorise what would then be extra-judicial or unilateral actions. It sees such actions as empowering democratic internationalism; instituting a balance of relational forces and disavowing exceptionalism.

### **iii) DECLARATIONS: MOTIONING BRICS’ CLAIMS**

To BRICS global governance is an evolving, geopolitical process. In order to gain a commanding position, BRICS uses its Declarations to motion its claims. The Communiqué of its very first leaders’ meeting, on the margins of the G8 summit in 2008, presents its logos: appealing for recognition, based on its increased economic power. Citing its combined GDP to be a quarter of the world’s it affirms that this number will continue to grow. To assert authentication it uses OECD statistics (BRIC, 2008). In 2009 it further sought to capitalise on the recognition it received, tactically applying Goldman Sachs’ original designation of BRICS as a grouping of emerging economic markets. This initial claim for authority and inclusion into the group of powerful global states was not successful, as exemplified by the continued existence of the G7.

BRICS then moved to substantially change its line of attack. Not to exact, but to pressure for its desired global outcomes; thereby grouping itself as leading members of the expanded global fraternity of nations. The 2011 Declaration moves beyond advancing the G20. It commences with an increasingly central strategy, to present itself as a leading driver of reformed global governance. Throughout subsequent years BRICS would declare upon states of affair, what should and should not be the case internationally. The 2009 Declaration establishes this precedent in light of international financial architecture. These comments of reform invariably relate to accepted principles for the normative and legal execution of global governance.

To further build towards its global governance goals, through cooperation, it has consolidated an outreach programme similar to the very *Heiligendamm Process* which incorporated BRICS countries at G8 summits. Each summit since 2013 has invited both



neighbouring regional states and regional bodies to a meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS summit. In 2015 it emphasised its willingness to expand its network<sup>93</sup> and in 2017 it first touted the idea of BRICS Plus.

The outreach programme is accommodated to impress the message that BRICS is an inclusive regime looking for a consolidated partnership. Such admittance presents BRICS as open to non-BRICS countries, dispelling exclusivity as alliance and fostering broader cooperation. The outreach programme, though clearly problematic as tokenistic, ostensibly suggests that it does not speak for anyone, but instead with them, inclusively. Considering that the outreach programme is repeated yearly, it could be that it becomes formalised as BRICS Plus. Lissovolik (2018) suggests that BRICS Plus may well be consolidated into another platform<sup>94</sup> consisting of regional arrangements (Lissovolik, 2018). This concept is based on the five previous summits each inviting its regional configuration. Such an aggregation, with BRICS at its core, could very well transform it into an elevated and potent mechanism in global affairs.

In the light of expanding cooperation, BRICS systematically declares its desire for “increasing engagement with other countries, particularly developing and emerging market economies” (BRICS, 2014c). It affirms active support<sup>95</sup> for developing countries, committing “funding and technologies” and “accelerating sustainable growth” (BRICS, 2011c). Its movements commit to “increase in the voice and representation of developing countries...in a just international monetary system” (BRICS, 2012b); “achieving sustainable development objectives and supporting developing countries in the implementation efforts” (BRICS, 2014c). Illustrated here as well as elsewhere BRICS clearly details ‘what’ it intends, but not ‘how’ it intends on accomplishing it. Its engagement explicitly contrasts and avoids defined leadership over developing countries. Yet its posturing as an

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<sup>93</sup> “The BRICS are open to cooperation and constructive engagement with other countries, as well as open with international and regional organizations in dealing with current international issues” (BRICS, 2015k).

<sup>94</sup> Lissovolik suggests the establishment of a platform, consisting of The African Union (South Africa), Mercosur (Brazil), the Eurasian Economic Union (Russia), SCO (China) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (India).

<sup>95</sup> BRICS Declarations engage by propounding: “we reaffirm”; “we recognize”; “we commit”; “we reiterate”; “we believe”; etcetera.

alternative to the G7 and its campaign for alternatives to established bodies leaves serious questions of international leadership unanswered. Instead, by elevating more states to international participation it emboldens these states to positions where they can claim their own independent agency and in the process depresses the command of the hegemon. This leaves BRICS with a favourable impression from weaker states and recognition from those more powerful.

BRICS' focus on previous and actual crises, such as security, finance and the environment, presents the world as being in disaccord<sup>96</sup>. The group deliberately persuades a broad audience to "judge future events by divination from past events" (Aristotle, 2004: 44). These judicious appeals for reform consign the fault to developed states. In a formulaic fashion, the Declaration first assesses a given condition in light of the developed world (as liable), with the developing world bearing the adverse effects. A comprehensive, normative solution is then provided and concluded by BRICS committing itself to such amelioration. For example:

"excessive liquidity from the aggressive policy actions taken by central banks to stabilize their domestic economies have been spilling over into emerging market economies, fostering excessive volatility in capital flows and commodity prices. The immediate priority at hand is to restore market confidence and get global growth back on track. We will work with the international community to ensure international policy coordination to maintain macroeconomic stability conducive to the healthy recovery of the global economy" (BRICS, 2012b).

And:

"Developing countries face challenges of infrastructure development due to insufficient long-term financing and foreign direct investment, especially

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<sup>96</sup> In 2013 it condemned the "abuses and acts of violence against the civilian population" of the Central African Republic (BRICS, 2013c). In 2015 it expressed its support for humanitarian efforts in South Sudan, Libya, Syria and the DRC, commending the work of UN agencies that "stabilize the region and protect civilian populations" (BRICS, 2015a).

investment in capital stock. This constrains global aggregate demand. BRICS cooperation towards more productive use of global financial resources can make a positive contribution to addressing this problem. In March 2012 we directed our Finance Ministers to examine the feasibility and viability of setting up a New Development Bank for mobilizing resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries” (BRICS, 2013c).

Over the years BRICS has increased its adjudication of and direction for reform. It has systematically expanded its Declaration, so to impress with bulk. Not only have the Declarations become longer in word, they have increased from pledging 15 commitments in 2009 to 92 in 2014 (Kirton, 2015); a steady increase from 16 points in 2009 to 110 in 2016. These commitments have evolved over the years. The focus has systematically shifted to global relations. In 2009 five commitments related to energy concerns, while in 2014 24 points addressed international cooperation (Kirton, 2015). From 2015 the agenda expanded dramatically to include more internal initiatives. These have mandated and capacitated various Ministries and SOCs to collaborate in working groups relating to health, media and other public affairs. 2015 also saw the commencement of a more direct push<sup>97</sup>, while the 2017 Declaration started making unambiguous demands<sup>98</sup>. These are clear signs of BRICS’ maturing and evolving posture.

While it refrains from direct criticism of nation-states<sup>99</sup>, it singles out institutions<sup>100</sup>. The bulk of the countries it addresses directly are those it pledges solidarity with,

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<sup>97</sup> “We express our commitment to resolutely reject the continued attempts to misrepresent the results of World War II” (BRICS, 2015a).

<sup>98</sup> “We reaffirm our commitment to conclude the IMF’s 15th General Review of Quotas, including a new quota formula, by the 2019 Spring Meetings and no later than the 2019 Annual Meetings” (BRICS, 2017c).

<sup>99</sup> The only state it criticizes by name is the United States: “We remain deeply disappointed with the prolonged failure by the United States to ratify the IMF 2010 reform package” (BRICS, 2015a).

<sup>100</sup> “We remain disappointed and seriously concerned with the current non-implementation of the 2010 International Monetary Fund (IMF) reforms, which negatively impacts on the IMF’s legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness” (BRICS, 2014c).

advancing reform<sup>101</sup>. The focus on public conditions has become a central feature of Declarations, advancing social consciousness and empowerment. BRICS has increasingly commented on the improvement of social matters such as health<sup>102</sup>, youth and gender<sup>103</sup>, as well as environmental matters. Earlier Declarations appealed directly to UN agencies and similar bodies, whereas in recent years BRICS have taken it upon itself to act upon these matters<sup>104</sup>. Since 2014 it has increasingly called for and initiated greater people-to-people relations, boosting a civil force behind its initiatives. BRICS intends its “enhanced people-to-people connectivity will further stimulate interaction among BRICS countries, people and society” (BRICS, 2015a).

BRICS’ consensus building, public-focused approach is shown in its Declarations committing to and pushing for the UN SDGs and the earlier MDGs. These are persuasive vehicles for goals that require consensus and differentiated global responsibility; shifting towards partnership and diversified obligation instead of the centralised donor/beneficiary relationship. BRICS may craftily commit as a group, but since it does not execute as a group, it has no responsibility to bear.

Furthermore, environmental problems and its support for ‘green’ initiatives are mentioned in every Declaration. BRICS speaks to this pertinent and topical matter in direct correlation to its reform claim; away from established systems and towards alternatives. In 2009 it stressed an open “constructive dialogue...based on common principle of differentiated responsibility” (BRIC, 2009), while in 2016 it declared “the need to scale up low carbon fuels and other clean energy solutions”, which require access, international

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<sup>101</sup> For example: “The UN has a core role to play in the coordination of the international community efforts to settle the situation in Afghanistan” (BRICS, 2015a).

<sup>102</sup> For example: “We underscore our firm commitment to strengthen dialogue and cooperation in the fields of social protection, decent work, gender equality, youth, and public health, including the fight against HIV /AIDS” (BRICS, 2011c).

<sup>103</sup> “We confirm our strong commitment to address social issues in general and in particular gender inequality, women's rights and issues facing young people and we reaffirm our determination to ensure sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for all” (BRICS, 2014c).

<sup>104</sup> “Recognising global health challenges we emphasise the importance of cooperation among BRICS countries in promoting research and development of medicines and diagnostic tools to end epidemics and to facilitate access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines” (BRICS, 2016c).

cooperation and finance (BRICS, 2016c). Concentration on the green economy and sustainable development, an NDB declared focal point<sup>105</sup>, is not only a tactic toward improved ecology but also a measure to grow influence. In nearly every Declaration it has supported and elevated the evolving *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change*. In 2016 it lauded the signing of the resultant Paris Agreement. This acclaim could well be perceived as a clear advance of multilateralism, embodying the principles of common differentiated responsibility and capability. It motions towards the implementation of the Agreement to secure influence<sup>106</sup>, while urging developed countries not to renege on its obligations and “to provide financial, technological and capacity-building support to developing countries to enhance their capability in mitigation and adaptation” (BRICS, 2017c).

Energy is a broad and strategic dimension where BRICS share “complementary strengths”, agreeing “to exchange knowledge, know-how, technology and best practices” (BRICS, 2012b). To coordinate closer on energy relations BRICS has signed an *MOU on Energy Saving and Energy Efficiency*<sup>107</sup>, which since 2015 has offered an attractive space for BRICS energy Ministries to conduct economic intensive business<sup>108</sup>. On the surface energy is used as a public diplomacy tool; Declarations are filled with comments on the importance of energy<sup>109</sup>, committing to the universal access of clean energy<sup>110</sup>, including

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<sup>105</sup> The NDB has purposed to mobilise “resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects” (BRICS, 2014a).

<sup>106</sup> “We recognise that nuclear energy will play a significant role for some of the BRICS countries in meeting their 2015 Paris Climate Change Agreement commitments and for reducing global greenhouse gas emissions in the long term” (BRICS, 2016c).

<sup>107</sup> “striving for strengthening and further developing of energy saving and energy efficiency cooperation among the BRICS countries based on the principles of equality and mutual benefit” (BRICS, 2015f).

<sup>108</sup> The 2015 Action Plan mentions a “Meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Energy preceded by the meeting of Working Group on Energy and Energy Efficiency” (BRICS, 2015a).

<sup>109</sup> For example: “Underlining the strategic importance of energy to economic development, we commit to strengthen BRICS cooperation on energy” (BRICS, 2017c).

<sup>110</sup> “We will expand sourcing of clean and renewable energy, and use of energy efficient and alternative technologies” (BRICS, 2012b).

nuclear<sup>111</sup>, as central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and “critical to the shared prosperity and future of the planet” (BRICS, 2016c). At the same time, BRICS confirms that “energy based on fossil fuels will continue to dominate the energy mix for the foreseeable future” (BRICS, 2012b). Energy lies at the core of the global strategic economic and security nexus. Close relationships allow for considerable business and security benefits. To assure a state’s sovereign independence it must maintain secure access to its energy. BRICS’ exchange opens doors for greater energy interdependence and power outside of Western influence<sup>112</sup>. Inter-BRICS agreements have already produced a number of significant deals<sup>113</sup>. BRICS’ increased energy relations pursue independence and abate Western control over the sector.

Finally, organic documents evolve throughout subsequent years. The procedural nature of the Declaration can be used to impress specific dynamics, such as extolling perseverance, preventing traps of stagnation and repetition. In 2013 BRICS completed its first cycle of summits. The moment was remarked on as both the successful completion, as well as an opportunity to renew and rejuvenate commitments. This impression of durability, maturation and purpose was expanded. In the next year, it used the commencement of the second cycle to impress maturity, to recommit to its shared views. The 2017 Declaration followed suit. It was used to further “build on the outcomes and consensus of our previous Summits with unwavering conviction” (BRICS, 2017c). BRICS purposefully uses the momentum of its first cycle of summits and its first decade to affirm its “pledge to deepen our partnership with a renewed vision, based on openness, inclusiveness and mutually beneficial cooperation” and to evolve “new areas towards a comprehensive cooperation and a closer economic partnership” (BRICS, 2014c).

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<sup>111</sup> “we stress...nuclear safety standards with a view to increasing public confidence in nuclear energy as a clean, affordable, safe and secure source of energy” (BRICS, 2012b).

<sup>112</sup> The US and European Union have placed damning sanctions on the Russian gas and oil industry following the Russian incorporation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014.

<sup>113</sup> In 2015 South Africa’s Department of Energy and Russia’s Nuclear Energy Corporation (Rosatom) signed two publically maligned MOUs on nuclear power co-operation; in 2014 China and Russia signed a \$400 billion gas deal and in 2017 China bought a \$9 billion share of Russia’s state-run Rosneft oil (Reuters, 2015; Mazneva, Bierman and Blas, 2017).

## CONCLUSION

Summit Declarations prove to be effective tools to pursue influence and shape global governance. They signify BRICS' embodiment of international order. Its regime toward international reform accords and exhibits a strategy to actualise principles and norms of the networked system; it motions leadership. BRICS members cooperate in order to influence toward greater networked intergovernmentalism. This strategy presents stability. The BRICS regime is, however, a shared tactic which holds no necessary permanence, nor obligation. Declarations are mechanisms that BRICS use to bring strategic items into the public consciousness. Its summit diplomacy appeals are deliberately persuasive, not coercive. While its strategy shows great caution, its will to lead is becoming increasingly ambitious, suggesting imminent difficulty in remaining neutral. BRICS' common but differentiated responsibilities approach proposes strategically diminishing the structural dominance that powerful states have over the weak. Cooperative development and self-realisation, not under imposed conditions or charged good governance obligations, allows for independent agency. It instils greater sovereign function and advances its pursuit for legitimacy and influence. Ultimately BRICS' promotion of autonomy that opens states to new interferences could facilitate new forms of hegemonic behaviour.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **ANALYSIS OF BRICS' OPPORTUNISTIC DOCUMENTATION**

"Human activity of politics is an art...By understanding how matters of style are crucial to the practice of politics, we discover not sham, but design, not decoration, but a world of meaning".

Robert Hariman (Hariman, 1995: 195)

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter completes the analyses of BRICS documentation. Following the examination of BRICS' legitimization in the established international order (programmatic) and its legitimization in and of itself (organic), this chapter synthetically closes the triad of analyses by looking at its presentations at international fora, communication at events outside its direct control (opportunistic). Previous chapters looked at BRICS as the central protagonist. Here BRICS uses its active participation at broader fora to opportunistically style the issues outside of its ambit in order to first recognise and then be recognised internationally. In these documents BRICS seize upon issues to design meaning from the rhetorical situation according to its selected style. This process is directed at territorialising the international domain according to its interests.

#### **RECOGNITION**

BRICS presents press Statements following its high-level international meetings and summits. These opportunistic documents advance its programmes and affirm its summit Declarations. Organic and programmatic documentation persuade through the direct performance of the global strategic environment. This third category employs indirect means: Communiqués and Statements. Collective responses at international fora where all BRICS states are members present appeals to a sense of belonging, to recognition and territorialisation of the multilateral domain.



Recognition regards more than acknowledgement or feedback from others. It entails a deeply interpersonal endeavour. Salazar (2015) views recognition, in the military sense of reconnaissance, to relate to the strategic seizure of a space, making it a territory (Salazar, 2015: 413). Recognition is linked to territoriality and legitimacy. When these spaces are recognised as legitimate an authority can set a standard, by motioning it as such. In order to assure such a relationship, the communication and recognition of power is imperative.

Once subjectivity is established between parties recognition affords dynamism, locating the argument in a place, delineating subjectivities. Mutual recognition, affords epistemic authority to others, allowing for the admission into normative space (Mattias, 2013). According to Brandom (2007) “recognition is a normative attitude. To recognise someone is to take her to be the subject of normative statuses, that is, of commitments and entitlements, as capable of undertaking responsibilities and exercising authority” (Brandom, 2007: 136). To recognise the other is to accept them as a subject in one’s normative world; being recognised means being granted agency in a political domain. The persisting contention between the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the US is illustrative. The DPRK strategically postures the threat of nuclear assault upon the US in the quest for recognition and the subsequent negotiations which would follow. The US’s refusal to recognise the DPRK presents a rejection of its subjectivity in a potential negotiation, disallowing the DPRK normative access and strategic participation in the international political domain<sup>114</sup>.

Control over the global domain is not an aim pursued in the content or form of BRICS’ opportunistic communications. Instead, BRICS seeks recognition as a normative subject, as an actor taking up equitable strategic territory, displacing the territory of dominant powers. BRICS shapes and redefines norms with itself at the representative core; effective leaders shape their message to align to views that their audience already holds (Reicher et al, 2007). Opportunistic documentation seeks recognition by responding

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<sup>114</sup> The strategy of the US in the first half of 2018 suggests a change. The US appears to leverage negotiations with the DPRK, as an apparent move against China. Discussions with the DPRK should be seen as tactical recognition, giving it a chance to territorialise this partner of China.

to existing phenomena. They relate to events beyond their control, shaping the perception and reactions of participating states.

The conflict and instability in Syria presents a clear case where BRICS recognises an international situation in order to draw international attention to it, as well as be recognised for doing so. Syria presents an opportune situation to shape the international perception of matters beyond its direct control; configuring the narrative regarding Syria and the international order at large. Every UNGA statement since the start of the conflict, bar 2014 when it focused on the founding and functioning of the UN, the condition in Syria is authoritatively addressed. These tactics are demonstrated in the sections below:

“The ministers stated their resolve to maintain the unity of approaches to the Syrian issue at the UN Security Council. They noted that an escalation of sanctions against Damascus would provoke opposition to ratchet up confrontation with the authorities. And this would only aggravate the situation even more and put regional peace and security in jeopardy” (BRICS, 2011b).

“They called upon all parties to commit immediately to a complete cease-fire, to halt violence and to end all violations of human rights and humanitarian law” and “The Ministers expressed satisfaction with recent important developments that bring renewed hope for a peaceful resolution to the Syrian conflict” (BRICS, 2013a).

“They noted that terrorist activities of the extremist organizations which control large parts of territory of the Republic of Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic pose a direct threat not only to all the countries of the Middle East, but to the whole international community” (BRICS, 2015k).

## **KAIROS**

BRICS is fundamentally a kairotic body, composed to acquire territory in a fluid international order. Kairos, Greek for an opportune and decisive moment (Merriam-Webster, 2017), holds a qualitative character for timeliness and is central to Aristotle’s

rhetorical design. BRICS' documentation and in particular its Statements opportunistically pursue both qualitative temporal and spatial considerations. The ability to judge a situation, acting accordingly, corresponds to recognition and ownership over the related matter or territory. In order to territorialise, BRICS relies greatly on an appreciation for *kairos*; to capture recognition at the decisive moment.

*Kairos* is fundamental to BRICS' original ethos, assigned by the 'thought leadership' and publicity of Goldman Sachs (Bourne, 2015). The BRIC countries opportunely adopted the recognition of its combined, ascending ethos, to gain subjective agency in the global discourse. The ethereal financial concept, as suggested by the original designation<sup>115</sup>, collapsed when the countries combined to recognise and therefore territorialise its name. Its *kairotic* subjectivity commenced when the leaders performed the self-ascribed *BRIC* moniker, in a media Statement following its first formative meeting in 2008. This is a statement of origin, a founding moment; subsequently, there has been a tangible record affording meaning and direction. It transformed recognition into territoriality. Claiming a name is to claim hegemony over the territory or locus (Segun Ige, 2002: 94). This formative expression eclipsed a statement of intent and realised potential in a *kairotic* moment of design. BRICS' origination encompassed a claim and seizure of geopolitical territory; signalling coherent purpose and direction.

This first text commences to foundationally affirm "their first meeting in this format", while it closes by agreeing "to continue coordinating their moves on key economic issues" (BRIC, 2008a). Hereby BRICS creates and sustains its identity. This opportunistic proclamation of subjectivity is by extension a proclamation of power<sup>116</sup>, an affirmation of agency, transcending the boost and free ride that was afforded by Goldman Sachs.

The first leaders meeting presented a rhetorical opening to the BRICS narrative and scenario. It was largely an announcement of BRICS' agency, therefore intentionally brief.

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<sup>115</sup> Goldman Sachs' 2003 paper is titled: "Dreaming with BRICs?"

<sup>116</sup> In 2008 BRIC proclaimed that it represented 45% of the world's labour force and 25% of the global GDP (BRIC, 2008a).

Instead, the Joint Communiqués that followed the Finance Ministry meetings, on the sidelines of the G20's yearly summit, encompassed the initial opportunistic tools in the early years of BRICS. These documents constructed a conceptual foundation. They provided a platform for BRICS to form itself through assertion, parading its value and virtues. These statements carefully pushed the group's agency in the global financial debate, a space to pronounce upon continuing financial crises<sup>117</sup>. The Communiqués utilised BRICS' recognition as financial powers, presenting expedient expressions, such as judgments "on the reform of international financial institutions and global governance" (BRIC, 2008b). By interjecting itself into the broader, global discussion, BRICS signals support and rejection; amplifying its ethos and pathos. These assertions of financial power ceased in 2011, replaced in 2012 by a Statement detailing the meeting of the leaders at the G20; supplanting particular (recognised financial) power with comprehensive (claimed political) power of command. This move was not incidental. Instead, the form that replaced the Finance Ministry Joint Communiqués bears significant insight to its expanded opportunistic modalities. While the early documents displayed the moment of founding, they remained ends in themselves, limited by their locales.

In 2009 the G20 opportunely expanded to a comprehensive economic mandate when it declared itself the "premier forum for our international economic cooperation" (G20, 2009). Subsequent meetings would thereby open the kairotic space for active, creative participation in economic global governance. It furthermore emphasised the expanded influence of high-level meetings among leaders (summits), suggesting these are increasingly the locales that rhetorically shape international processes and global governance. BRICS' development can be seen as a coherent response to these regulative proclamations. The increased prominence of international summitry presents an alternative to formally constituted institutions (for example the IMF or WTO) and moves toward constituting intergovernmental order. This indicates power's return to the state as

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<sup>117</sup> Example: "we reflected on the main causes of the current financial crisis, its latest developments, future scenarios, as well as BRIC experiences and policy responses...we exchanged views on the reform of international financial institutions and global governance. We also discussed proposals put forward by the countries on reforming the global financial architecture" (BRIC, 2008b).

the centre of authority. Summits displace the fixed, hard law approach of international institutions, proposing power as a fluid process, requiring constant re-constitution.

## **SUMMITS AS RHETORICAL SITUATIONS**

Summits and summit diplomacy are integral to BRICS' strategy. In addition to organic documentation, opportunistic statements emerge from high-level international meetings, the locales of power. Apart from its yearly leaders' summits, BRICS leaders meet on the sidelines of the G20 conference, while Foreign Ministers from member states meet on the sidelines of the UNGA. These are the most prominent international fora where all BRICS are members, ideal (neutral and non-hierarchical), legitimate venues for BRICS to claim common ground and maximise influence and interest while minimising overreach. The remaining analysis in this chapter focuses on the Statements emerging from the UNGA and G20, as apex global political leadership forum and global economic leadership forum, respectively. BRICS uses these platforms to coordinate and consolidate its own positions while aiming to influence and leverage the positions of fellow participants. Presently both occasions provide informative statements, composing the core of its opportunistic documentation. Here BRICS opportunely delineates its substantiating intergovernmentalism<sup>118</sup>.

By authorising these organisations, it reflexively legitimates itself. Initially, its opportunistic documents touted its "value and significance", as a group representing 43% of the global population (BRICS, 2012b). This claim, core in its early years, changed away from impressing upon its significance. Instead, it now assays a neutral position; instead of promoting itself, it advances multilateral norms, rhetorically propounding equitable international relations and the empowerment of the developing world.

BRICS maintains a mode of continuous establishment through G20 and UNGA Statements. It regards the global condition, presenting its strategic role in an entangled and sophisticated way. BRICS establishes its involvement in recognising the UNGA and

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<sup>118</sup> Discussed in chapter four.

G20, acknowledging its legitimacy; avoiding direct responsibility. Instead, BRICS' membership ensures that its Statements present constructed and delineated advocacy.

Summits increasingly shape the political processes of the networked order. They facilitate intergovernmentalism by configuring the “architecture, institutions and, most critically, the political and policy behavior of the actors engaged in the influence of outcomes of common concern in the international system” (Alexandroff and Brean, 2015: 2). Summits therefore engage and declare upon situations that produce conviction. As such summits commandeer the response to international situations. They respond to and manage situations. According to the G20 it is purposed “to develop global policies to address today’s most pressing challenges” (G20, 2018). This is done by pronouncing upon international affairs, ensuring maintained recognition and influence. The ultimate convention that international leadership summits pursue is to corroborate and elevate their continued collaboration. The recommitment to these fora produces re-territorialisation and the preservation of the status quo. Summits play the part of assembling world leaders to show cognition and conviction of global demands; these rituals occupy, as well as perform, leadership.

Under this comprehension, summits are rhetorical situations; providing leaders with the context, means and ways to act, as well as the substance and constraints to respond to. Central to the rhetorical situation is an urgent need or demand, or exigence. Bitzer (1986) advances that every rhetorical situation has “at least one controlling exigence which functions as the organizing principle: it specifies the audience to be addressed and the change to be effected” (Bitzer, 1968: 7). It is towards this exigence that rhetors direct their oration, seeking control over the situation. The exigence is the guiding principle. It is a potential end to be brought about, requiring the appropriate resources and audience, as it also requires the absence of constraints that will configure the speaker and the audience. An exigence provides for a response, which itself draws a reciprocal response (Bitzer, 1968). In the exploitation of the exigence, Bitzer advances the need to move the mediators of change (the audience), while observing the given constraints to the actions that modify it (Bitzer, 1986: 8). A kairotic response to the rhetorical situation,

through its own statement on affairs at international fora, sees BRICS manifesting its own version of events in order to enter into and command international subjectivity.

BRICS regularly refer to influential institutions and bodies in its communication<sup>119</sup>. The inverse is however not the case. BRICS receives very little recognition from established international organisations, formal or informal. Though it is a limited illustration, as BRICS states are often members of these groupings, its gross lack of recognition does allude to the DPRK case, mentioned earlier in this chapter. It is not within the ambit of this study to further pursue this matter. It does, however, provide grounds for further study. It will be illustrative to observe the quantitative as well as qualitative recognition that BRICS is accorded.

Bitzer proposes that carefully sculpted discourse can “effectively constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence” (Bitzer, 1968: 6). Exigence is central in BRICS’ communication strategies. In producing its Statements BRICS contributes to the rhetorical situation’s expediency and immediacy. Its participation at international fora increases the gravity of international summits. The summit is both a rhetorical situation, as well as structurally being a pronouncement upon international developments; the representative expansion from G7 to G20 proving illustrative. In order not to appear external to the collective BRICS opportunistically affirms the leadership of the host and commits to the exigence of the summit, declared in the theme. This ensures that its Statement does not facilitate its own rhetorical situation. While Statements affirm this association<sup>120</sup>, their end is to secure greater recognition for itself and conversely de-territorialise the established power order. G20 Declarations sustain dominion, while BRICS’ Statements interpose, painting an untenable global situation. It does so in a number of ways. It remarks on global insecurity<sup>121</sup>; deficient

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<sup>119</sup> “They urged the need to ensure that trade and economic blocs are consistent with WTO norms and principles and contribute to strengthening the multilateral trading system” (BRICS, 2015I).

<sup>120</sup> BRICS leaders “reaffirmed their willingness to work with other G20 members for a successful Summit” (BRICS, 2014b).

<sup>121</sup> “leaders strongly condemned the abhorrent terror attacks in Paris” (BRICS, 2015I).

economic infrastructure<sup>122</sup>; inadequate recovery from the economic crisis<sup>123</sup>; and non-representative institutions<sup>124</sup>. In sum, summits declare command over international exigencies, while BRICS' Statements, especially at the G20, assert that the opposite is the case.

While veiled under the broader international domain, these persuasive performances indicate BRICS' aim of capitalising on the circumstances at hand. Both setting and timing are strategically exploited. BRICS uses the established recognition of its member states as permanent members of both fora to produce an internal, limited collective. BRICS' actions and Statements procedurally recognise each other and thereby elevate the influence of their combined ethos; shaping the process and deterritorialising the control over the broader collective. By seizing exclusive territory inside these fora it compels those excluded into recognising it, providing BRICS with a platform and an audience.

Furthermore, BRICS releases its Statements a day before the G20 Statement is released and while the UNGA General Debate is ongoing. These efforts not only engage the discussion in progress<sup>125</sup>, but through providing historical linkages to previous Statements and events it steers international pedagogy. By delivering its own account it seizes the moment, inducing its distinct signification. In doing so, while knowing the content of the broader proceedings, it is able to strategically shape the debate, presenting a distinct and compelling argument which manipulates the rhetorical situation.

BRICS pursues influence through advancing an ameliorated international condition. Both UNGA and G20 Statements focus on the world at large. UNGA Statements are generally broader, dealing with approaches and style, whereas G20 Statements are more

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<sup>122</sup> "We welcome the contribution of the New Development Bank and Contingent Reserve Arrangement to international financial stability and sustainable development" (BRICS, 2017b).

<sup>123</sup> "the global economy was still at risk and its recovery was not yet sustainable" (BRICS, 2015l).

<sup>124</sup> "we stress the importance of increasing the voice and representation of EMDCs in global economic and financial institutions" (BRICS, 2017b).

<sup>125</sup> "the BRICS maintain a constant dialogue on the main issues on the international agenda" (BRICS, 2015k).



issue-specific, pressuring for the execution of definite resolutions. BRICS Statements direct attention to issues it wants to focus on. When it says that “(T)he current situation requires decisive actions”; that “(W)e are taking necessary steps to secure growth, maintain financial stability and contain inflation”; and finally that “(T)he contribution of BRICS countries and other emerging market economies to global growth is rising and will increase further” BRICS interjects the present to actively introduce a future state of affairs (BRICS, 2011a). Its Statements rhetorically offer leadership over the international situations<sup>126</sup>. When it states that “we are concerned with the slow pace of quota and governance reforms at the IMF”, it speaks not against the IMF, but to it (BRICS, 2011a). BRICS’ motions engage the agents it addresses. It does so in order to gain recognition and territoriality. Its outward engagement is to ensure the stability of the networked international order.

## MIMESIS

BRICS hardly acts. Instead, it displays, through mirroring. The very first assertion in its inaugural Statement following the Foreign Ministers meeting on the sidelines of the UNGA in 2008 is revealing. It reports that “(P)riority issues on the 63rd UNGA agenda were discussed” (BRIC, 2008c). This statement is illustrative of BRICS’ broader mimetic rhetorical strategy. In producing its own narrative, BRICS reproduces the authority of the UNGA, through its own words; showing, through the enacted representation of character, rather than telling. This practice of mimesis, performative imitation, is a tactic to create common ground, to be recognised. Hartman (1999) contends that “(R)hetoric in the service of mimesis, rhetoric as imaging power, is far from being ‘imitative’ in the sense of reflecting pre-existent reality. Mimesis becomes *poiesis*, imitation becomes making, by giving form and pressure to a presumed reality” (Hartman, 1999: 23).

Mimesis is fundamental to understanding BRICS’ strategic communication. BRICS imitates and re-enacts global order in order to ensure its multilateral functioning. In doing

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<sup>126</sup> In its 2011 UNGA Statement BRICS “noted that an escalation of sanctions against Damascus would provoke opposition to ratchet up confrontation with the authorities”. Instead, it supported the urgent “carrying out the reforms announced by Syria’s government so that people could really feel the benefits of the change” (BRICS, 2011a).

so it constructs agency, to shape the agenda and conjure global order. It reproduces reality in order to speak out; strategically remaining dispassionate. BRICS states are valid international members; they do not need to prove anything. Instead, BRICS' mimesis reaffirms both the global arrangement and BRICS itself.

Imitation is foundational to BRICS; indicated by its incorporation of the pre-existing Goldman Sachs moniker. Through mimesis BRICS expediently presents its interests to its audience. It serves what is in front of it, exploiting the situation at hand. BRICS' mimetic performance aligns to Isocrates' insistence on the presentation of civic excellence (Terrill in Benson and Snee, 2008). Mimesis is not mere mechanistic duplication; instead by being spoken the content becomes part of the personification of the speaker, who in turn is substantiated manifestly with signification. Mimesis creatively fashions meaning according to the logos it utilises. While representation accords to intention, it is adaptable as "means of self-fashioning" (Hariman, 2008: 136). Mimesis is a significant medium of style, a way of consciously using existing works to serve present goals.

The embodiment of texts, of modalities and values, however established, under a new constitutive speaker opens a new conversation. By simply adding its voice to existing calls, such as for "resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict" (BRICS, 2013a), BRICS introduces new agency, a potentially different view and a potentially new outcome to the matter. By incarnating the issue it claims that the matter is not stagnant, nor is its outcome predestined. Its motion on the issue removes its inertia.

Instead of relaying the mediated views of individual countries, with internal inconsistencies, it advocates directly, contributing synergistically. The style, in which the content is reincarnated, in turn, produces its ethos. Temporally the process of mimesis, though taking from the past, does not pay tribute to what has happened, but instead reanimates in the present, looking forward. BRICS aims towards preferred future conditions by suggesting that "universally accepted norms, standards and practices is of paramount importance" (BRICS, 2013a).

Through the process of mimesis BRICS tangibly becomes. It seeks to derive and subscribe its ethos through the "sympathetic magic" of mimesis, drawing on the

“character and power of the original, to the point where the representation may assume that character and that power” (Taussig, 1993: xiii). BRICS uses mimesis, advancing original authorities, while accurately embodying its ethos and power, through form<sup>127</sup> and content<sup>128</sup>. While the structure and subject matter is taken from the UNGA and G20, the active agent is BRICS. Across its opportunistic Statements the typical paragraph, if not sentence, commences referentially with “the leaders” or “the ministers”, followed by an operational verb, such as “affirm”, “support” or “reiterated”. The intention is not to palpably act upon these matters, but to ascribe agency, instilling the impression that BRICS holds authoritative prominence.

## **EPIDEICTIC**

The use of rhetoric, as opposed to the epistemic end of the dialectic, is based upon the contingent beliefs that shape conviction. To BRICS the process of mimesis is a creative display of these beliefs. Aristotle discusses such a disclosure of virtue under the epideictic or ceremonial oratory. As a mirror to established authority, BRICS’ opportunistic Statements can appear judicial, but the epideictic regards not so much the speaker. Instead, the audience, not as a judge or debater, but as a spectator, witnesses the disclosure of praise and blame (Prelli, 2006: 295). The audience is therefore “judging, not about the matter of discourse, but about the orator’s skill” to move them (Perelman, 2012: 6). BRICS’ observations of proceedings are shaped to convince an audience. Instead of the speaker being the active party, the epideictic seeks to move the audience to take action. The audience is inspired by their reading. The text invokes feelings. The epideictic presents a vision or form and inspires the audience to actualise it<sup>129</sup>. As such it seeks to animate the audience, to ensure they internalise the message, to arouse active participation (McKeon, 1994: 211).

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<sup>127</sup> BRICS’ G20 Statement reflects the form of the G20 media Statement.

<sup>128</sup> BRICS’ UNGA Statement affirms the same content that is discussed at the UNGA.

<sup>129</sup> For example: BRICS “shares a common vision which drives it to also increasingly identify common areas for cooperation to assist with finding global solutions to global challenges” (BRICS, 2013a).

The archetypal epideictic piece, Pericles' funeral peroration to the fallen Athenian soldiers during the Peloponnesian War, does not beseech the people to go to war. Instead, his endeavour is to frame the historical moment (Thucydides, 1982). BRICS' Statements do not pay tribute to the dead in the fashion of Pericles. It does, however, pursue similar ends. Its goal is to glorify and territorialise the extant multilateral order; to inspire a kinetic movement towards these ends. So too BRICS frames the contemporary international order<sup>130</sup>. It presents its ideals when it exclaims: "we stress the importance of upholding a more inclusive, balanced, and open world economy" (BRICS, 2017a). These displays prefaced by "we firmly support" or "we affirm", makes confirming use of the personal qualifier "we". It thereby builds a relation between its formative self and the ideals it espouses.

Furthermore, it applies an energetic form that brings the intended object or state-of-being into the present; not by deed, but through an appeal to virtue. The current events where BRICS publishes its Statements provides it with what Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (2014) define as *presence*: "displaying of certain elements on which the speaker wishes to center attention in order that they may occupy the foreground of the hearer's consciousness" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2014: 93). BRICS' Statements do not foreground the event, but instead the topics, the ideals, principles and agreements, establishing these in the minds of the audience. It hereby makes correlations between ideas, events and agents, according to its interest. BRICS advances its arguments through a strategic display<sup>131</sup>. An argument is more convincing when the audience can relate; when it can feel that there is something present. BRICS makes reality by performing it.

Sheard (1996) expands a broader, historical understanding of the epideictic, saying that it designates "discourse appropriate within pedagogical or ritual contexts" (Sheard, 1996: 767). Taking from this comment the epideictic can be denoted as 1) ritualistic; 2) pedagogical and 3) assigning praise and blame.

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<sup>130</sup> For example: the "need for a comprehensive reform of the UN...making it more representative, effective and efficient, so that it can adequately respond to global challenges" (BRICS, 2014e).

<sup>131</sup> Discussed in chapter four.

BRICS' delivery of its yearly Statements depends on the recurrence of international fora. These documents are opportunistic in their very existence. Its form and content depend on the G20 and UNGA fundamentally maintaining its procedural consistency. This allows the promulgation of its ritualistic message. Were the G20 to deviate from its conventional course or were it to comply to or exceed BRICS' petitions it would throw off BRICS' formalistic invocation towards reform, usurping BRICS' foundational appeal. BRICS' current form is therefore paradoxically dependent on its calls not being recognised.

In ritualistic form, BRICS repeats the same message for effect. Through mimesis it vitalises the form in the present moment. It furthermore often recalls<sup>132</sup> or reiterates<sup>133</sup> already established documents and commitments. Repetition suggests that these commitments have not been put into place as agreed, thereby showing dedication to implementation as well as blaming the mechanisms of power for reneging on its commitments. Repeatedly stressing that the global economy has not recovered sufficiently since the 2008 financial crisis<sup>134</sup>, BRICS uses repetition to emphasise the continued failure of resolution. These Statements do not say or prove anything new. Instead by repeating it, it advances conviction and removes doubt. It does not produce practical exigence. The use of ritual is an extraordinary use of language; it is due to it breaking the behavioural rules that it gains value (Carter, 1999: 212). It does not seek engagement to convince; instead, ritual breathes life and assigns meaning.

The epideictic approach affords pedagogical guidance. The 2011 UNGA Statement advises that "escalations of sanctions against Damascus would provoke opposition to ratchet up confrontation with the authorities. And this would only aggravate the situation even more and put regional peace and security in jeopardy" (BRICS, 2011b). In the context of ongoing events of global consequence, BRICS takes advantage of international gatherings to guide through consigning meaning to complex affairs. Projecting a firm

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<sup>132</sup> "the Ministers recalled the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (BRICS, 2016b).

<sup>133</sup> "They reiterated the urgency of unblocking the IMF reform as a measure to reform global economic governance consistent with the interests and needs of the developing countries" (BRICS, 2015k).

<sup>134</sup> "As to the world economy, six years after the beginning of the international financial crisis, the Leaders noted that a strong and long-lasting recovery is yet to materialize" (BRICS, 2014d).

understanding of what has happened and what is likely to happen it establishes a paradigm for praxis. Furthermore, by saying “the Ministers reiterated that there is no military solution to the conflict and that it is time for diplomacy” (BRICS, 2013a), BRICS both makes sense of the situation as well as encourages others to accept guidance in particular behaviour. Instruction through disclosure reciprocally conceals alternatives, as well as that which is not being said, even when unintentionally done. Concealing possibilities further inform the nature and intent of the speaker. Naturally, it is difficult to examine what is being left out, especially when content is ritualistically repeated. What is instructive from exclusion is that BRICS Statements procedurally use developing (non-BRICS) countries as its subjects. Herein the member states avoid their own centrality in seeking what is essentially betterment for them<sup>135</sup>. Concealing or rerouting their instrumentality also allows for concealed criticism. This is the case when BRICS directly accuses developed countries of their “unintended negative spillovers of unconventional monetary policies” (BRICS, 2013b).

The central function of epideictic is to showcase the honourable and the shameful, what deserves praise and what deserves blame. The use of praise and blame serves the same function, whether positive or negative, to move the audience to feel and take the speaker’s wish further. The primary example of BRICS’ praise and blame relates the fulfilment or failure of commitments and conventions. Its Statements at the G20 repeatedly praise “emerging market economies” for “contributing to global economic activity by sustaining high growth rates, despite adverse circumstances and spillovers of major advanced economies” (BRICS, 2014e). The recurring condemnation of the IMF’s deferred implementation of agreed reforms succinctly focuses on international institutions’ failures<sup>136</sup>. When BRICS remarks that “major economies, including the G20, could do more to boost global demand and market confidence” (BRICS, 2013b) it opportunistically consigns responsibility and critiques non-compliance.

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<sup>135</sup> “They reiterated the urgency of unblocking the IMF reform as a measure to reform global economic governance consistent with the interests and needs of the developing countries” (BRICS, 2015k).

<sup>136</sup> “The leaders also reaffirmed their disappointment and serious concern at the non-implementation of the 2010 IMF reforms, and its impact on the Fund’s legitimacy and credibility” (BRICS, 2014e).

The use of praise and blame personifies subject and object; it situates BRICS as a conscientious agent. When it says that “they highly appreciated the role played by Egypt in the cessation of hostilities” in the Gaza Strip, it is in “support for the immediate resumption of negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians based on international law and relevant United Nations resolutions” (BRICS, 2014e). Herein BRICS is supporting its principled position, seeking to move the international audience to advocate for the upholding of international law. The firm standard (deserving praise) is UN legitimated state sovereignty; whatever threatens its realisation is criticised<sup>137</sup>.

BRICS procedurally blames recent instabilities in the international order, especially where aggravations affect the sovereignty of states. Its UNGA Statements are keenly focused on the sovereign crises in Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, Libya and Israel/Palestine. In these states and elsewhere outside interventions are condemned, yet belligerents are never named, so to avoid involvement. Condemning all actions against sovereign states brings the actions of intervening states into the discourse on undermining sovereignty, including terrorism; a potent tactical equivalency that the epideictic affords. BRICS does not define or delineate *terror*<sup>138</sup>. Instead, terror’s maleficence is simply condemned. This allows the failure and the need for functional UN systems to be highlighted simultaneously. Its overall advocacy for a principle-based approach when addressing extra-judicial affairs presents leadership, an apparent response to the recent, increasingly managerial direction that foreign policy has taken in dealing with problems on the local, regional and global stage (Alexandroff and Brean, 2015).

Pericles’ peroration is kairotic, inspiring the city to prevail, extolling the greatness of Athens and its people. His is a true *vox populi*. So too BRICS’ praise is for a networked international order, seeking to inspire its merits to be held high. It is not the personal expression of the member countries, but an attempt at a collective, global voice. The manifest scope of both the UNGA and G20 ensures that BRICS’ business is equally broad. A

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<sup>137</sup> “The Ministers voiced serious concern over the conflict areas in Africa that negatively affect the security and stability of some States” (BRICS, 2014e).

<sup>138</sup> Illustrated here: “The Ministers stressed the role of the BRICS Counter-Terrorism Working Group in further deepening the dialogue on counter-terrorism cooperation” (BRICS, 2017a).

global audience and landscape also ensures that no one is excluded, or implied as oppositional. Instead, the comprehensive nature of the message facilitates *communitas*; an appealing construction, wherein all are included. By transcending the national and regional scope BRICS' broad claims are not territorial to a bounded state, but to the global order at large. The comprehensive view obviates the potentially antagonising picking of sides. Instead, it pedagogically presents a global, inclusive vox populi.

Returning to the comparison with Pericles, his oration centred on Athens itself. Sparta, the direct enemy, is never named outright. Similarly, though BRICS condemns actions and conditions, blame is used to stimulate conviction for and allegiance to the multilateral international order<sup>139</sup>. BRICS uses terror and domination to signify loss, in turn glorifying the valorous system it espouses. BRICS' value is elevated by the enemy's depravity. It uses these failures to re-vitalise the international system according to its wishes. BRICS suggests that to "combat terrorism...the international community should take the necessary steps to enhance cooperation...(and) particularly highlighted the UN cooperation framework and the need for all member states to implement international convention of the United Nations" (BRICS, 2008c). Its opportunistic claim is therefore that terrorism can only be legitimately addressed through a collective effort led by the UN, involving the affected states. Such an exercise would elevate the agency of member states.

The 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the founding of the United Nations offers BRICS a prime epideictic opportunity to pay tribute while projecting forward. Its call for "the UN to initiate and organize commemorative events to mark and pay tribute to these two historical moments" and their reaffirmed "commitment to safeguarding a just and fair international order based on the UN Charter" is in revitalising praise for the openly multilateral spirit and body that emerged from the Second World War (BRICS 2014a). This opportune moment to rejuvenate the founding principles bolsters BRICS' claim for comprehensive reform.

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<sup>139</sup> "The Leaders reiterated their wholehearted commitment to the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, with the United Nations playing a central role...They emphasized the need for a united global effort to combat terrorism in accordance with norms and principles of international law, including the UN Charter" (BRICS, 2016a).



The 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary is the central theme in the 2015 UNGA media Statement. It charges the revitalisation of multilateral relations and diplomacy in order to pay “tribute to all those who fought against fascism and militarism and for freedom of nations” (BRICS, 2015k). By procedurally returning to the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary the text maintains the original, legitimate embodiment of the UN through re-activation. By aligning itself to original UN authority<sup>140</sup>, it confers praise upon itself, by association. Commemoration returns it to the formative beginnings of the UN. This modality of representation conceives of it as malleable; denoting it under these imaginary conditions allows for greater signification, at a lower risk than simply speaking out at random. Rhetorically these commemorative events are powerful platforms.

BRICS also tactically confers praise and blame on matters that are novel or are aberrations of what is perceived as standard. New developments provide opportunities to shape perception. The announcement and subsequent launch of its NDB and CRA are central examples where novel matters are praised in light of current problems<sup>141</sup>. Even before the launch of these instruments, they were lauded to “raise BRICS cooperation to a fundamentally new level” (BRICS, 2014e). The very launches of these institutions are signalled as successes, hailing the combined efforts of separate agencies in partnership. The true achievement lies in the principle of cooperation, not the fact of its realisation. The use of the epideictic is to charge this principle.

BRICS presents itself as a leading advocate of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, “committed to continue to work towards the full implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals” (BRICS, 2016b). Its commitment is however to the spirit, not the deed, of achieving the programme. This is shown by all BRICS member states falling outside of the top 50 implementers of the SDGs while calling on “especially the

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<sup>140</sup> It is in BRICS’ (especially Russia and China, as leading members) interest to represent the allied victory of the Second World War as a grouped achievement and not simply as the triumph of the West. In 2017 BRICS leaders expressed “their commitment to resolutely reject the continued attempts to misrepresent the results of World War II” (BRICS, 2017a).

<sup>141</sup> “the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) has been established and will contribute to the stability of the international financial system in view of the increased volatility of the world financial and economic situation” (BRICS, 2015l); and the “NDB’s potential to bridge the gap in financing infrastructure projects” (BRICS, 2016a).

developed countries, to fulfil their commitments and provide strong support for developing countries” (BRICS, 2016b; Sachs et al, 2017).

## RHETORICAL STYLING

Style is central in understanding and utilising rhetoric. For language to achieve its strategic function it should suit purpose, setting and audience. Cicero, a master of style, said bluntly in his *Epistulae ad familiars* (Letters to Friends): “I don’t always adopt the same style. What similarity is there between a letter and an oration in court or at a public meeting?” (Cicero, 1891: 9.21.1). The language and figures of speech that may invigorate a partisan-specific audience are unlikely to be effective in a newspaper of broad readership.

The style that BRICS adopts through its communications has been discussed relationally throughout this dissertation. It has foremost been channelled into three analytical categories (programmatic, organic and opportunistic), which have then conceptually explored the strategic aspects of the methods of delivery that BRICS uses throughout its communications. BRICS styles its claims; addressing specific matters regarding power diffusion, accountability, legitimacy, etcetera. It uses the conventions and principles of established international relations to advance its ethos.

Closer examination is now paid to how BRICS rhetorically styles its communications. Instead of a pure stylistic analysis, style is used to construct understanding, identifying general aspects of the texts. Hariman’s (1995) conceptions of style, particularly his *republican* and *courtly* styles, are considered as fitting modalities. While *invention* looks at *what* (the means), *style* addresses *how* (the ways) ideas are expressed and how arguments are presented; how common ground is territorialised. Style is central to all persuasive arguments and is of great importance in the study of BRICS.

BRICS’ form has matched its style; mirroring the UN and showing forth its ethos. Style, as any technique, says Hariman, is “to displace any other kind of intelligence” (Hariman, 1995: 3). BRICS’ foregrounds leadership ethics as *presence*, transmitting a feeling through artistic gestures. By displaying itself as a leading regime it seeks to claim territory historically held by the West. BRICS leaders opportunistically express grief and

celebration; executing its agenda. Its territorialisation of the international order pursues the personification of intergovernmental networked order.

BRICS' documents create a distinct agency, grounded in emotions and ideals. These are not logical, abstract claims. Instead, they deal with specifics, pursuing first recognition and then motion in their chosen direction. BRICS' choice of style gives dynamism to the values it espouses. It stimulates passions. Passions exceed the evocation of sympathy (pathos), driving the audience to act seemingly autonomously. To Aristotle passions provide the territory for conviction (Dow, 2015: 1), their evocation assures recognition. Passions inform the style, as it is through style that the rhetorical situation is shaped and through which common ground and displacement is sought.

Style is not incidental but strategically details the design, how an argument is constructed. It is forward-looking, using the present to build into the future, executed through clarity and specific diction. BRICS' insider status allows it to opportunistically recognise legitimacy, thereby situating its arguments within a greater territory. To that end BRICS employs *courtly* and *intergovernmental* styles, to move and inspire belief and influence at international fora.

Mimesis is used together with the epideictic to amplify BRICS' style. BRICS participates in a conversation that is rhetorically formed. Style relates to the conditions under which this conversation is held; the decided selection of vocabulary is how politics is styled. Politics such as BRICS employ styles to arrange, to illustrate meaning. BRICS' style does not separate power from its communications; its argument remains greatly one of style. Hariman illustrates that style reflects "oratorical virtuosity for public performance", it entails "an appreciation of verbal technique, a norm of consensus, the embodiment of civic virtue, and a doctrine of civility" (Hariman, 1995: 4). These features are constant across BRICS documentation and will be used to illustrate here.

## **COURTLY STYLE**

BRICS' overarching (outside-in) courtly style is on account of the insider status held by member states. The courtly style is used to locate BRICS in the international order or the

‘court’ of the UN; the foundation upon which modern internationalism stands, where common ground is built. Hariman advances the court to be empowered as the ultimate authority (Hariman, 1995: 51). His model of the courtly style is significant as BRICS enduringly commits to UN legitimacy. In the king’s court it is he who is elevated beyond all else, his word holds authoritative finality; the king is the embodiment of legitimacy. He forms the deep materiality, the physical presence of power. In its courtly style, BRICS directs all form of decorum to the UN, proposing it to be the legitimate arbiter of the global realm<sup>142</sup>. BRICS coordinates its rhetorical positions around the foundational principles of the UN, so as to remain inside of its realm, ensuring recognition and avoiding repudiation.

The UN forms the outer layer to which BRICS fixes itself, its confirmation is a central claim advanced throughout. Hereby BRICS rebuffs any hegemonic formations. Through its courtly style, it remains within the ambit of a greater authority, making the pursuit of its own interests (when aligned to the UN) possible; style details the form. This style territorialises for an indirect purpose, achieving recognition not for itself, but for the broader UN system. By declaring its common ground, of UN centrality, it strategically serves to immobilise any charge of it soliciting the ‘crown’, “it closes off deliberation about the purpose, values, and direction” (Hariman, 1995: 94). In a similar fashion, the G20 presents another layer of authority. BRICS Statements comment on the efficiency of the G20; though BRICS forms part of the G20 its critique advances its strategic position. The 2015 G20 Statement primarily discusses matters of global concern, well beyond BRICS’ control or jurisdiction. In affixing itself to the greater domain it opportunistically absolves itself of responsibility, while still speaking out on matters of international concern<sup>143</sup>.

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<sup>142</sup> Expanded on in chapters three and four.

<sup>143</sup> The first lines of the 2015 G20 Statement read: “The Leaders strongly condemned the abhorrent terror attacks in Paris. They expressed their condolences to the families of the victims and extended their wishes for the speedy recovery of those injured” (BRICS, 2015I).

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL STYLE

BRICS' narrow (inner) style advances networked intergovernmentalism. As legitimate members of the international system BRICS states have the capacity to cooperate freely; BRICS uses power to display power. Its re-animates the order based on the anxiety that the structure is ineffective or threatened by domination. Its deliberate engagement in the group rebuts hegemony and advances the shared judgment of member states of being denied their appropriate international agency. This performance tactically territorialises the international order as multilateral and equitable.

This dissertation has demonstrated BRICS' pursuit for greater multilateralism, actualised by sovereign states, cooperating in an intergovernmental manner. In this order state authority is re-centralised in global governance; the core-periphery model is usurped by networks among state-nodes. As such a fluid, multipolar or polycentric world egresses. This end, facilitated by common standards, authoritatively designed and maintained, can be seen as BRICS' intergovernmental version of Pettit's (2016) "globalized republican ideal" (Pettit, 2016: 22). This is a realm of negative liberty. Peoples organise freely in bodies (states), which in turn enjoy freedom from external agents, constituted in their affiliation with other such global bodies (Pettit, 2016: 48). State sovereignty allows distinct agency between them, establishing networked order. Freedom of states creates freedom for peoples and vice versa. Through the virtuous intergovernmental style displayed by BRICS it presents the order it desires. BRICS' opportunism, therefore, persuades not through management, but through gesture: presenting an image, inspiring recognition.

Working from the basis of the UN (the court), BRICS' inner style approximates Hariman's Ciceronian republican style to construct a version of republican internationalism. Internationalism forms the strategic ways of BRICS' unfolding intergovernmental style. As the republican style does, BRICS' intergovernmental style presents the state as a hands-on authority, not outsourcing to institutions, but allowing for direct correspondence among independent states.

While each BRICS member state is a proclaimed republic, it does not assert its own distinct internal mechanisation on the collective, but instead collectively manifests global

governance, by pronouncing it so. Through the speech-act of regeneration or reform, BRICS articulates the form wherein it has agency. This agency allows it to have reciprocal power through its pursuit of “upholding a more inclusive, balanced, and open world economy, creating an enabling environment for the development of EMDCs...so that the benefits of globalization can be shared equally by all countries” (BRICS, 2017b).

Cicero’s republicanism employs speech energy. So too BRICS’ texts animate passions, seeking to inspire belief. They do not actively drive; the text functions as a vehicle for its persuasion. The realist as a direct actor must know how not to fall into persuasive traps, “in the republican mind, persuasion is the essence of politics, rhetorical virtuosity is the surest sign of political acumen, and public speaking is the master art” (Hariman, 1995: 6). Intergovernmentalism counters international tyranny. Not through force, but through representation. It strategically uses style to return to the texts, to the laws and the ideals of organising principles. Intergovernmentalism functionally invokes reform through speech. Saying it makes it so. For example: “The political coordination between BRICS members has been and will continue to be undertaken without any element of confrontation with other countries” (BRICS, 2015k).

BRICS’ grouped behaviour is to style, instead of enact. According to Hariman the “world of texts is not the world of princes”, as in Machiavelli’s republican realism (Hariman, 1995: 22). Whereas the realist prince inspires belief and faces challenges through his actions, in intergovernmentalism this happens through abstracted ideals. To BRICS members the state is formed upon domestic ideals emerging to form the sovereign, a configuration of *res publica* (the public thing). Republican-inspired internationalism maintains an inward authority (national sovereignty) and non-domination (externally). Avoiding tyranny, this order is an empire of law, not of men. This is an ideal notion where the law is embodied in virtues carried in speech and then executed by persuaded actors. The republic is composed of public performances of oratory and persuasion. The republic “stands on thin air...constituted in discourse”, it needs to be promoted and established through belief (Hariman, 1995: 111).

Under the empire of law the republican style, versioned here as intergovernmentalism, presents the personification of political culture; giving form to

proper and virtuous ideals, through rhetorical performance. Cmiel discusses Ciceronian republicanism as “government by discussion as opposed to force of fiat. Speech was more important to a republic than to any other kind of polity” (Cmiel in Hariman, 1995: 107). In the realm of international law, of governance without government, BRICS has styled its polity in the form of an empire of law. Cicero embodies the republic, incarnating its authority through oration. So too BRICS textually re-animates the international order under the UN Charter. Similar to the republic, BRICS substantiates its regime through discourse. Its current Statements opportunistically mediate its previous ones. In a Ciceronian fashion, BRICS moves to become the medium through which to understand the status quo. As Cicero’s republic was a work in progress, so too BRICS embodies a fundamentally fluid modern international system.

In the manner in which Cicero sustained the republic through his mediations, BRICS’ articulations buttress the ideals of the international system. Whereas “Cicero had, in fact, become the idea of the Roman Republic” identifying “harm to the state as harm to himself” and “harm to himself as harm to the state” (Habricht, in Remer, 2017:145), so BRICS’ goal is to revitalise the reformed international order. However, Cicero’s strategy of boasting his substantial ego, to justify his capacity, is not seen with BRICS, downplaying managerial responsibility. BRICS’ rhetorical embodiment means that it primarily points out issues from the inside of the UN or G20. It is to its advantage when issues roll over, advancing the need to reform. Avoidance of responsibility leads to doubts around interest and status, as posed by Remer’s question: “if the representative stands for the whole, then what room is there for the represented?” (Remer, 2017: 145).

Cicero’s personalising of the international system meant that “there was no enemy of the republic who did not also declare war on Cicero” (Hariman, 1995: 115). BRICS’ personalising of the ideal, in the manner of Cicero’s republic, suggests that any attempt to the body of the international order is a direct injury to all those upholding it and therefore to BRICS and its member states. This ploy is to tactically integrate itself into the international, affording central agency and influence. Though unlikely, the maturing of this stratagem could lead to BRICS engaging active power. The embodiment of the system is thereby a means to power; inciting the ideal could be an attempt to transfer authority of

the greater whole onto the body. Embodiment “epitomizes the republican identification of politics and persuasion, for embodiment is a rhetorical accomplishment that in turn fuses speech and action, speaker and subject, technical artistry and political status” (Hariman, 1995: 116).

Representation amplifies the ethos of the orator. Ideals that are represented are done so tangibly in space and time. BRICS situates its text in a greater, global conversation. Its current document or Statement always presents a reflection or capitulation of the previous year, thereby constituting a rolling timeline, seeking to create a broader narrative. The past is incorporated under BRICS’ agency in order to found the present and structure the future<sup>144</sup>.

BRICS Statements are presented into a space that is already constituted and defined. The selection of what it discourses on comes out of this existing space, requiring less invention and more repetition. The audience is also predictable. Under these established conditions it can be shrewd in its choice of intervention, calling out issues purposefully and using events to restructure truths. With abundant choice, failures are also likely. BRICS’ obsession with the highest order of international persuasion, as with republican persuasion, facilitates an insiders’ game. It only really speaks to those already actively involved or in the case of the G20, to its select members. It is therefore limited to those it is already exposed to.

BRICS moves to fill the space that is opened by regular structural changes in international affairs. The modern era’s changes under forces such as globalisation, digitisation and environmental degradation have opened further opportunities and challenges for composing the international order. BRICS’ Statements opportunistically move to be an active voice in capturing reality, defining the situation and thereby shaping the narrative. By expressing “concern about the reported practices of unauthorised interception of communications” BRICS leaders exploit the relatively novel, ambiguous yet

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<sup>144</sup> For example: “The Ministers recalled exchanged views on global and regional issues in the economic and political spheres. They are determined to continue to contribute positively to the maintenance of peace, security and stability, including by upholding multilateralism” (BRICS, 2016b).



increasingly pervasive matter of cybersecurity as a threat to “national sovereignty” and thereby insisting a statist response (BRICS, 2013a).

BRICS’ reaction to the topical issue of global environmental degradation illustrates how it endeavours to ensure the newly opened space is filled to its liking. In this case, it simply asserts its continued support for the United Nations Climate Change Conference. It does this by affirming “determination to adopt the Paris Conference protocol”, known as COP21, as an “agreed outcome with legal force...that is applicable to all Parties” (BRICS, 2015l). Herein it assures that this broad and global issue is afforded differentiated responsibility. BRICS calls for COP21’s institutionalisation to be a “comprehensive, balanced and equitable agreement...attained in an open, transparent, inclusive negotiating process” (BRICS, 2015k). Its support is therefore for the adoption of the cooperative, mutually beneficial multilateralism that BRICS espouses. The fact that Chairwoman Christiana Figueres referred to COP21 as “multilateralism at its best” and “what we need in all other areas of the UN” ensures indirect animation, strategically supporting BRICS’ efforts without it having to sponsor and occupy the space itself (Figueres in Darby, 2016).

The BRICS body arrives from a space of cooperation. As with the republican style BRICS’ consensus “culminates in a model of leadership that features personal embodiment of the civic culture” (Hariman, 1995: 102). Its united front is therefore not only directed towards greater interaction but is sine qua non enabled by it. As the embodiment of the international order is a constant throughout its texts, so too is BRICS’ embodiment of itself. It perennially manifests itself throughout its texts<sup>145</sup>. By illustrating cooperation BRICS documents convey an impression of consummate consensus between the states. Exhibiting reciprocal trust and benefit among member states presents the example for broader, international consensus. Its textual embodiment centrally displays an illustrated outcome, an ideal or even utopian end state.

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<sup>145</sup> For example: “BRICS strategic partnership based on the principles of openness, solidarity, equality and mutual understanding, inclusiveness and mutually beneficial cooperation” (BRICS, 2016b).

A recent method to advance trust and benefit beyond its group has been touted under the BRICS Plus initiative. While it remains unclear what BRICS Plus will entail, its proposed expansion will, to some extent, incorporate other states into its regime, expanding its authority. Were it to achieve expanded interaction, it would increasingly ensure that the broader international conception is incomplete without BRICS' presence.

In the manner that Cicero works form a unified whole, with each document "always available as a resource for the other" (Hariman, 1995: 112), BRICS incorporates UN-sanctioned international agreements together with its own documents to form an integrated narrative. By increasingly echoing a call for implementing pre-existing accords<sup>146</sup> it takes a coalescing form, ordaining and concretising itself in the functioning of the UN.

In the republican style reputation is central. Cicero's letters show that reputation "was the medium in which one's principles and desires existed...the very means of personal integrity (and) the glue that held one together within the constantly shifting alliances" (Hariman, 1995: 139). In constructing a collective reputation BRICS has recently started greater consolidation. In 2014 a new modality for concluding the UNGA Statement emerged. In near verbatim fashion, a paragraph at or towards the end of the text confirms that Ministers have "discussed the possibilities of mutual support of their initiatives" at the "UN General Assembly" (BRICS, 2016b). These announcements align to the entreaties of recent BRICS Summits, for "further enhancing of our collective efforts" (BRICS, 2016c). They reveal BRICS' increasing claim for, if not foreshadowing of, collective action at international platforms. Previous studies (Hooijmaaijers and Keukeleire, 2016) have already proven that while there are correspondences between the behaviour of BRICS states at international fora, there is, however, no significant development in voting coherence at the UNGA. The exhibition of individual states fixed in consolidated operation will prove testing as this would transcend its textual existence and threaten its claim of not being an alliance. Under Hariman's republican style influence stems from a careful balance between assertion and compliance (Hariman, 1995). It portends that BRICS will increasingly substantiate itself in the coming years, certainly affecting its reputation.

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<sup>146</sup> "They recalled 2005 World Summit Outcome Document" (BRICS, 2015k; BRICS, 2016b; and BRICS, 2017a).

Through substantiated activity BRICS will not simply be able to comply with designated authority but will form an operational group, testing its strategies.

According to Hariman the republic and by extension the intergovernmental network is “endangered by silence, for without the continuing discussion of public duties, virtue could wane” (Hariman, 1995: 111). BRICS’ maintenance of the order assures that it is not captured or revived from elsewhere, preventing other agencies from enacting it. BRICS’ opportunistic Statements and its use of the epideictic illustrate the conservative animation of the system it wishes to maintain, while its mimicry of established accords maintains the international form, impeding possible efforts to change or meddle with established polities.

The intergovernmental style presents rhetorical dexterity; its exploitation of the means is not the result of the delivery (Hariman, 1995: 102). It is about the feeling that is created during the performance, the belief that is inspired. People are at the centre of the republic, therefore the role of the state is to have them feel empowered, while the state executes power. BRICS increasingly focuses on people-to-people tactics<sup>147</sup>. Such a form is only possible when world order “helps to define the sovereign liberties relevant to each state...and it helps to protect and perhaps resource individual peoples so that they can exercise and enjoy their sovereign liberties” (Pettit, 2016: 58). BRICS opportunistically performs this order at international fora. This contrasts Westphalian<sup>148</sup> non-interference, which cannot hold in the hyper-globalised contemporary world. Instead, BRICS expands networked order. Through non-domination states cooperate in concert with other states, embodying, as BRICS has, a common space between grossly different states; abandoning the core-periphery model and substantiating a networked, yet differentiated modality.

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<sup>147</sup> For example: “The Ministers supported the efforts in deepening people-to-people exchanges and cultural cooperation...so as to deepen bonds and ties amongst its peoples” (BRICS, 2017a).

<sup>148</sup> The Treaty of Westphalia (1648) brought peace to war-plagued Europe. It birthed modern international law under “the foundation of the modern state system...articulating the concept of territorial sovereignty” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018).

## CONCLUSION

BRICS' opportunistic Statements are used to further its strategic goal of vitalising the intergovernmental network order, from the inside out. It does not create a new system but substantiates the existing collective, sovereign domain. It actively assures the global court, while reciprocally being assured by it. By adopting the intergovernmental style BRICS seeks to foster the evolving networked order.

States have interests, not ethics. BRICS uses ethics opportunistically<sup>149</sup>. Its regime invigorates the intergovernmental network. By extolling the virtues of the UN it demonstrates it as fair and just. While display or mimesis is powerful BRICS remains circumscribed by its tactical inactivity; increased action would risk its neutrality.

At present BRICS has neither the means nor the will to 'walk' its 'talk'. Its decision whether to substantially expand and materialise or not will be determining; whether persuasive direct action joins or supplants its rhetoric. If it transcends being an inner layer and increasingly manifests itself, it will push from being a regime inside the broader network to becoming the network itself; the form that BRICS Plus assumes will be illustrative. BRICS' future configuration will be discerned by whether or not it constructs consequential institutions. This looks unlikely within its current formation and might rather materialise through an alternative formation<sup>150</sup>, but if this happens it will increasingly manifest a BRICS Consensus.

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<sup>149</sup> For example: it supports and advances the SDGs and opposes terrorism in 3<sup>rd</sup> countries.

<sup>150</sup> The SCO (which includes China, Russia and India) increasingly appears a preferred 'hands-on' organisation, to BRICS' 'hands-off' diplomatic approach. This is seen at its meeting in May 2018 where President Xi called on SCO members to further elevate their level of security cooperation (Xinhua, 2018a).

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This dissertation has explored and described BRICS' strategies of persuasion. Unpacking these strategies has in turn accorded direct discernment of the group. These understandings are significant as previous studies have primarily discussed BRICS in often limiting, rationalising and compartmentalising ways. These works have critically under-explored BRICS' rhetorical essence, deducing and abstracting meaning and substance from the member states and from the designated signification of Goldman Sachs, not from the regime, as a distinct entity.

The dissertation has deliberately limited consideration of separate national approaches, using these only to background. BRICS' communications have been analysed to discern the regime, per se. Instead of aggregating the divergent strategies of member states, BRICS develops its own strategy. The dearth of consolidated knowledge of its strategies has inspired this research to centrally focus on description, analysing BRICS through its own operations and artefacts. Any emergent prediction stems directly from its own descriptions. The exploratory basis has inferred understanding based on observation and the use of appropriate tools; descriptive components function as support. The dissertation has expediently taken from various fields and schools of thought. The thesis was considered against the examination of central texts. Due to its scope and focus the dissertation has not addressed broader critical aspects. It has set out to analyse, not critique BRICS' strategies. This delineation offers a platform for expansion in a great number of directions. It serves as a basis for further explanatory and critical studies.

This dissertation has indicated BRICS to be a significant instrument through which to discern the dynamics and progression of networked intergovernmentalism and global governance reform. The area of concern here is the share of power of member states in the overarching, global political arena. This geostrategic realm of governance, beyond legitimate sovereign government jurisdiction, ensures abstract, multi-structured and fluid

scope. In this domain projection and perception is central. The dissertation's broader deliberation regards BRICS to be a regime through which to pursue the regional and global interests of member states. BRICS' strategic focus and locus is the global governance framework. It is a tool used by its member states to persuade.

BRICS is process driven, it brings together aspiring and emerging nations in an intergovernmental way, replicating and re-embodying the intergovernmental order. BRICS constructs itself as a rhetorical vehicle, driving across the belief that international relations are skewed, moving it toward reform. While certain aspects of global power, such as economic power, have clearly shifted, it holds that perception and influence precariously maintains a unipolar status quo. It is critical and expedient to examine how this alternative narrative employs persuasion to actualise rebalanced order. This dissertation has provided crucial discernment of how BRICS informs upon this framework. It has illustrated BRICS as a dynamic and kairotic rhetorical regime that paves the way between the contemporary moment and that which is to come. It has centrally innovated by assessing this realm through unpacking BRICS' rhetorical strategies.

## **REFLECTION OF BRICS' STRATEGIES OF PERSUASION**

The BRICS intergovernmental regime serves a specific purpose; its rhetoric moves strategically. This study has explored BRICS' signification through unpacking its tools of persuasion. It has discovered its specific rhetoric, assessing its communication instruments as ordered modes to employ and pursue its various strategies. These have contributed to delineating BRICS' persuasive strategies, as well as its strategic persuasions. It is appropriate to conclude by using the formative conceptualisation of strategy as reflecting means, ways and ends.

### **i) MEANS**

BRICS' central strategic means are the appropriate principles and norms of legitimate international law and order. BRICS' performance of sovereign independence, as well as cooperative interdependence, stem directly from this established international ethos and logos. It adopts this foundationally to set up and advance its positions. These means are

not exclusively to advance itself but to ensure and maintain international stability. Its purposed demonstration of established principles holds dominant powers to account while avoiding disorder and confrontation which it is not strategically capacitated to deal with. Application by BRICS ensures selective combination to re-appropriate substance and signification accordingly, advancing the interests of member states. BRICS systematically forms its ethos from the very resources proclaimed and apportioned under the UN and its Charter, the foundational international treaty. This is resourcefully used to claim legitimacy and common ground. BRICS strategically does not substantiate its texts with constructed or disparate ideals. This allegiance presents it as a brace for international governance, strategically advancing global reform while avoiding being seen as an alternative or threat; as advancing its own image.

BRICS' instrumental use of ideals and organising principles demonstrates governance, not a government. It furthermore uses specific events and cases of dereliction of duty as resources to advance this strategy. It draws upon statistics, international protocol, terror attacks, domination, wars, injustices, as well as deferred institutional reform, to assign blame and signify as negative examples. On the other hand, it praises the entrenched, normative international system, emerging states, as well as its own achievements and formations as exemplary positive examples.

Each BRICS state, as a legitimate unit of sovereign power, is a means toward constituting the collective; the states are the components that perform multilateralism. BRICS' utility of universal standards ensures a non-partisan platform through which states not only act and interact, avoiding forced alliance, but also extend influence beyond its format. Instead of negotiating and upholding formal treaties, BRICS states cooperate through political agreements that substantiate and advance decreed modes of operation; representing intergovernmental interaction through illustration. BRICS' informal intergovernmentalism operates upon the empire of law as persuasive grounding; established laws and institutions define realities of discernment. BRICS does not greatly interpret and develop new structures; its regime is located within the broader, supreme intergovernmental organisation that offers continuous and stable institutionalisation.

Compounded by legitimate parts BRICS is at core a strategic instrument. It is a resource that advances the related, yet separate interests of member states.

BRICS' documentation explicitly conveys meaning, yet they are also tools. The select vocabulary of the documents materialise identity, stimulate passions, create distinction and re-define perception. The documents are tangible resources that direct pressure and translate meaning in a chosen direction. BRICS is manifested through its communication instruments; these are the resources that together form the conceptual whole. BRICS' summit Declarations, agreements and Statements are the components that present and perform international legitimacy. Programmatic documents adopt and materialise principles, producing tangible means for movement. BRICS' programmes, its meetings, working groups and other mechanisms are authorised collectively to constitute the appliances and products of intergovernmentalism. Organic documents offer a process-driven reconstitution of meaning. Opportunistic documents seek interest by introducing a BRICS voice at international fora.

BRICS' ethos is not the result of each state combined. Instead, it is the singular collective product that advances an emboldened, re-embodied and therefore reformed governing framework. This embodiment and rhetorical advance assure that dislocated principles are encoded by BRICS, also supporting its ethos appeals. It performs this authority and credibility for the appeals they are. Legitimacy is a central means to BRICS. Through its collective demonstration, it tactically qualifies its design upon the legitimacy of the individual states; group signification is exhibited to strategically be consigned upon individual states. As an informal, networked structure BRICS provides an articulation of what will increasingly be a means of intergovernmental power.

## **ii)      WAYS**

BRICS' network of legitimacy enables it to pursue its ambitious agenda. This forms an alternative, intergovernmental narrative, legitimated by the continued existence of the corresponding G7. The persistence of a distinct G7 indicates that the G20 is not the only authoritative protagonist. This allows for an additional voice. BRICS, in a similar fashion to the G7, consigns legitimacy to the G20, while advancing its own. This narrative carries



meaning. It presents and endorses a particular, critical version of affairs, a specific way to rhetorically function in international order. This collective claim of common ground is a testament to BRICS' style. The introduction of an alternative narrative is an exercise of independence, a challenge to hegemony, but not to order. By producing an alternative it seeks to displace dominance.

BRICS' independence is its strongest appeal. Its autonomous narrative re-inspires intergovernmentalism through displaying sovereign authority, returning power to the centre of the state and by redefining international norms. It does so by transcending the domestic domain of each individual country. The separate states together present an intergovernmental modality which affirms the sovereignty of each. This exemplary expression approves functional intergovernmentalism, while in turn underscoring the present limited scope for independent movement. It explicitly uses international precepts of international law to illustrate this behaviour as exemplary, not aberrational.

BRICS is itself a strategic concept or way, a cooperative effort among individual sovereigns. This embodied collective, premised upon diverse national interests, necessarily has a mixed strategy. It manages its image according to topical international issues, engaging that which suits its purpose. A number of ways are incorporated to conjunctively and fluidly advance its interests. It moves between internal and independent identity. Straddling this composite space grants it greater freedom to act. From here it charts its own course, setting an example for others to aspire towards its privileges and achievements. Central to BRICS' strategic ways is its courtly and intergovernmental styles. These are the ways chosen to steer, arrange and illustrate meaning. BRICS rhetorically situates itself within the UN's 'court'. From within this realm, it advances intergovernmental networking between sovereign entities, vis-à-vis a unitary or supranational system.

BRICS employs latent multi-institutionalism to enact the international order it aspires to. By remaining inside the UN 'court', operating through multilateralism, yet outside alliance, its narrative remains inclusive and non-coercive. Its formations and institutions primarily do not oppose but seek to complement. BRICS' overarching

methodology is a direct evasion of great power rivalries (Thucydides Trap<sup>151</sup>). While BRICS is directed at reform, it pursues the maintenance of international stability, bandwagoning the traditional systems to gain power. Its entire strategy is based upon the preservation of the present, open international system. It cites its support for this in a mantra-like fashion, seeking recognition and influence through repetition. BRICS is enabled by the system in place; it exhibits the networked order in order to offer a brace for it. The fracturing of this comprehensive arrangement will not only have adverse effects for its aspired reform but upon its very ability to engage. It is perhaps indicative of greater synergy between BRICS and other states that the US as lone superpower is tactically reacting, altering or destabilising the open international order, the formation allowing BRICS states' ascendancy. This corollary practically opposes BRICS strategy, limiting its advance of calculated, open interaction.

BRICS' coherent and central strategic modality is formed as an informal intergovernmental organisation or regime. It is the form chosen to exhibit its ethos. Throughout its communication it reinforces its own expression of territoriality by performing the foundation, but also increasingly the evolution, of the networked order. While its strategy avoids progression into a narrow BRICS Consensus, its modes and means are steadily becoming more assertive, authoritative and ambitious. While its strategic hybridity ensures tactical performance it also creates obfuscation. The pragmatic intergovernmental regime pursues influence by demonstrating independence. It is formed through arrangement and illustration of meaning. While its voice consists of the combined member states, its regime, anchored in the logos of the UN 'court', is principally global and inclusive. BRICS tactically maintains a universal scope.

It acts as a channel, an embodied guide towards an independent expression of international relations. The regime, however, maintains little official responsibility or obligation. It can be ambitious and candid. BRICS' collective voice allows it to point out failures in the international order. BRICS is not only used to draw attention, member states also use it as a screen, desisting focus on them and avoiding culpability. Its

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<sup>151</sup> The Thucydides Trap refers to a war being the likely result when a rising great power threatens the dominance of an established power.

comments are not attributed to any individual country. It avoids direct confrontation. In order to preserve the space to act its regime avoids permanence and agency. It does not greatly institutionalise, nor does it move to enforce a new normative international foundation.

The BRICS regime mimetically performs and affirms the international order. Both BRICS and the international order are brought forth through this display. Mimesis is not duplication, but the creative re-enactment of global order. BRICS' reproduction presents a mediated view, it makes reality through demonstration. Its embodied narrative stimulates and delineates the broader narrative. Its narrative introduces new interpretation, ensuring re-articulation and seeking positive association. BRICS offers a disclosure of values; it shapes reality by displaying it. Its close relation to international order furthermore arouses pathos, suggesting an injury to it implying an injury to global order and vice versa.

BRICS does not directly challenge or balance global hegemony, nor does it have the means to do so. The group advances legitimate sovereign independence and delegitimizes dominance; soft balancing is a central strategic way to maintain stability and move towards greater power equivalence. BRICS' rhetoric of resistance is to soft balance hegemony. It strategically leads by acting out this broad, non-partisan vision. Leadership is a central method through which it seeks to convince others to pursue the same intergovernmental network; developing international conformity. Building credibility is easier from within the group; BRICS does not instruct or manage, through hierarchy or coercion, but seeks influence by exhibiting and embodying shared values. In order to move others to action, it employs kairos to induce meaning. Its documentation often reacts to global exigencies, opportunely advancing proposals.

Identification and recognition, while also relating to ends, are ways by which BRICS demonstrates a common appreciation for the principles and values of intergovernmental organisation. Situating itself in the UN 'court' affords it the perception of legitimacy. While member states are essentially apart, these approaches bring them together in common distinction and shared experience. Recognition and identification promulgate credibility and influence, both among BRICS states and with the broader international community. It allows internationalism to be reflected from state to state, in a fluid process of continuous

establishment of belonging. BRICS is, therefore, a network of recognition. Through collective membership, each state explicitly recognises and reciprocates the other. These are modalities through which space is created to reflect common perceptions. Through the process of rhetorical substantiation the group seeks to manufacture its chosen realities.

BRICS' advance of cooperative interdependence among sovereigns, in turn, delegitimises hegemonic behaviour. Its admonition of preferential treatment and its opposition to systematic control over international institutions tactically rejects Western dominance. Its discourse of resistance propounds the replacement of outsourced institutional power held by organisations with state-centric global governance. BRICS focuses its delegitimation campaign on specific concepts, such as abuse of control and dominance. This advances its push for greater diffused authority.

Hybridity as a central approach is tactically process-driven and multi-dimensional. Hybridity is a functional description. It operates across dimensions, both within the international order (as individual states) and beyond (as regime). This *both-and* development illustrates a world both in and beyond international Consensus. BRICS does not produce a new Consensus but instead presents a way towards one. Such a clearly defined Consensus can only be occupied when there is a pervasive order.

### **iii) ENDS**

This dissertation has illustrated BRICS' central strategic ends to be reform within the global governance domain. However, before reform can be pursued the foundation of intergovernmental cohesion must be ensured. Stability in the international system is an ultimate condition and is antithetical to the idea that BRICS seeks to overthrow the intergovernmental arrangement. This is the primary reason why it moves slowly, why it does not impose. Any analysis of BRICS that does not take into consideration this rationality remains incomplete and will only serve as a partial illustration. BRICS is a purposed vehicle that maintains the stable order that its member states require to pursue their interests. It interdependently exhibits this formation to ensure that concepts and principles are not re-defined by others. It stands as indirect opposition to hegemonic

appropriation and contagion, what Chomsky referred to as the model of *successful independent development*<sup>152</sup>. In order to ensure durable grounds to act BRICS' strategic reform is largely about dislocating or eroding (Western) domination, achieving greater agency for its member states in a re-embodied and re-constituted world order.

BRICS' strategic ends feature centrally throughout its communications. This is a method to achieving recognition, as an end; its rhetorical strategies can only succeed when they are being acknowledged. The ends of BRICS' operations (summits, agreements, meetings, etcetera) are to claim territoriality from dominant states and institutions. BRICS demonstrates the realisation of mutual gain, equity, shared legitimacy and credibility, without the formation around a core leader or hegemon. This persuades that informal arrangements are strategically superior to fixed alliances. BRICS is grouped in a regime, to forestall hard alliances.

It advances procedural relationships, where state cooperation does not require total consensus, allowing a perpetually emerging system. While formal arrangements construct instruments and institutions that occupy deployed power, such informal ones maintain state sovereignty at the core. These operate in a pragmatic manner, fluidly constituted and reformed. Presenting an ideal type where states do not have to contend with fixed hierarchies of privilege. For aspiring states this is attractive as the extant situation theoretically allows each the opportunity to project and claim power. The growth of these informal systems, whether treaty bound or not, will increasingly apply pressure to fixed, formal systems that function at the discretion of a core to a periphery or a hegemon to a hierarchy. BRICS' strategic communications propound informal interactions and relations between states as superior, ensuring an improved balance of powers. Greater competition between powers implies increased multipolarity (multiple truths), indicating a shift from predominant neo-liberalism to neo-realism.

Reform and multilateralism are presented as organic features that are organisationally decreed, but obstructed from manifestation. Such presentation maintains there to be a culprit at work, with BRICS as champion. It presents its actions as safeguards,

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<sup>152</sup> See page 37.

rebuffing the obstructing forces. These ends are not its own, without its existence, these remain. BRICS introduces its value by expounding reform, describing the ways and means towards it and designing what it should look like. In this light it holds anti-hegemony as strategic ends.

Reform that returns power to the ambit of the state will confine the power of institutions and dominant states. Though the UN will remain the legitimate core, such reform will affect its role and agency, altering it per se. This explains BRICS' motive for stressing itself as regime within the prevailing order. In the context of BRICS as a vehicle towards intergovernmental networked order, it has been illustrated here that the longer it exists and the more it systematises, the narrower the distinction and the more blurred the line between BRICS as regime and order. While BRICS is cautious of establishing and promoting an emerging global Consensus, its embodiment of order is increasingly exceeding its communication. It remains unclear what will happen if and when BRICS achieves its specific reform goals. Its substantiation remains intentionally vague. Reform is a rolling project, it is intentionally fluid, its final goal not clearly defined. New specified targets are constantly added. The greater success of increased influence of member states would suggest the end of BRICS' constituting reason to prevail. An ultimate practical accomplishment will be the territorialisation of power, increasingly incarnating authority in the order.

BRICS' hybrid structure has been shown to necessitate a negotiation between an international protagonist and informal structure. The BRICS regime is clearly not a final product, but a vehicle actualising the move toward the succeeding global power order. It is a collective (greatly rhetorical) tool employed by member states to utilise their window of opportunity to orchestrate the shape of things to come. Beyond this entity, as ways, the conception of BRICS Plus could develop to embody the true objective; incubating structural order, beyond regime. BRICS Plus is potentially an emerging illustration of an end, a 21<sup>st</sup>-century global Consensus, with China in an ostensibly leading position. This emerging Consensus illustrates BRICS' movement beyond the focus on dominant systems and into expanded, participatory design. Establishing concrete manifestations, such as the envisioned *BRICS Credit Ratings Agency* and *BRICS Local Currency Bond Market*, continue

moving BRICS beyond cooperation around standards and into tangible substantiation. These possible movements will increasingly take BRICS from vehicle to end. Whatever its form, it increasingly embodies the order it desires. If this goes unchecked it will increase the potential risk of great power conflict. These are new, unfolding concepts. It is of pressing consequence to watch BRICS as it redefines itself, as it and its member states redefine global power relationships, to see whether these future movements can achieve co-option without coercion.

It is apparent that BRICS wishes for organisational change. Yet, the diverging interests of disparate members largely prevent a clear model from emerging. This suggests a permanent state of strategic hybridity. Substantiation of emerging power dynamics is not the purpose of reform-seeking BRICS, yet achievement of its ends may imply this becoming contentiously implicit. The presence of an existential in-between, a scenario of both continued Western hegemony and global power diffusion (multipolarity), may prove to simply maintain global strategic inertia. Expressly, this would see the existing, solidified power structure remain intact, averting substantial reform. This exact strategic inertia is what brought BRICS into formation. By implication this may suggest strategic failure, the transcendence of a rhetorical contestation and the precipitation of the realist anxiety of the Thucydides Trap.

## **FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

BRICS is a valuable entity through which to interpret the changing global power relations. These observations require continued investigation, especially because it, as well as the domain it operates in, is evolving. This affirms the need to continue examining and utilising it in contextual and theoretical research in a number of relevant areas, moving deeper into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These include, but are not limited to, global governance, network sciences, regional leadership, multipolarity and power transition.

This dissertation has explored BRICS as it enters its second decade. Its communications and operations should increasingly become telling as it develops further. These iterations will continue to modify it, and the world around it. BRICS' development proposes an appropriate mode to interpret global change, a close examination of what

emerges under BRICS Plus will prove informative. Perhaps greater incorporation of or comparison to previous anti-hegemonic or aspiring groupings, such as NAM, will provide valuable historical insight to appraise BRICS. Correspondence to the G7 should also be illustrative. Furthermore, while BRICS seeks to disrupt Western power, it will be insightful to examine how these powers respond to BRICS. A direct, inverse viewing of Western strategies of persuasion will be highly elucidative.

BRICS should be of special interest to strategic studies and disciplines. Hybridity, irregularity and asymmetry, similar and overlapping concepts, are key drivers in the evolution of contemporary studies of strategy. These approaches could prove useful in the study of BRICS' development. It offers an indirect, informal, and evolving intergovernmental platform through which to assess the constituent states and their engagement. Beyond its strategic reasoning, it offers the tangible conceptualisation of the modalities that states use in networked globalisation. Formal and informal intergovernmental organisations will increasingly affect the international governing framework; these nascent platforms should be better understood through research, as they will directly bear influence on it. The growth of informal platforms, as indirect strategic tools for nation states to pursue their interests, will have a direct impact upon global authorities, including the structure and function of the UN. It is imperative to unpack how BRICS affects the authority and operations of the UN; what does BRICS want from the UN and how does it reconcile the strategic differences of member states at the UN?

This study has used hybridity to describe BRICS strategically. It has suggested that BRICS may seek to avoid concrete formations of power, instead realising a permanently fluid balance of powers. BRICS employs and centrally uses the concept of multipolarity, yet it remains obscured in that it is strategic, vis-à-vis multilateralism, which describes policy. The significance of BRICS' use of this term demands elucidation. While BRICS serves as a useful platform, it only partially portrays the international designs of emerging powers. It is of great importance that the strategies of the ever-growing plethora of international state and non-state actors are discerned. In an increasingly hybrid world, emerging bodies such as BRICS will play a substantial role in shaping the global balance of power.



These formations will employ myriad ways to pursue their interests and may drift from informal to formal agreements and anything in between. The greater their independent ability and capacity, the more these lines will become blurred, suggesting increased necessity to understand their agenda, to avoid confrontation. Within the prevailing domain of nation-states, complete independence is inconceivable as powerful states will always exact their influence upon weaker ones. It is therefore important for future studies to do what this study has not done and apply a comprehensively critical lens to BRICS as a potential elite formation seeking to subvert and co-opt influence towards establishing an alternative hegemonic structure.

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